

Malephora N. E. Brown

Malephora crocea (Jacq.) Schwantes, CROCEA ICEPLANT. Subshrub, leaf-succulent, evergreen, trailing and forming dense, prostrate mats sometimes rooting at nodes, < 35 cm tall; shoots having succulent leaves with bases decurrent on stem for 1 internode, leaves equal at each node, glabrous, conspicuously glaucous, pale bluish green. **Stems:** rounded-squarish in \times -section, initially very succulent, 4–8 mm diameter, tough, light green aging reddish, becoming nonsucculent and tannish after leaves die and become desiccated, internodes short to 50 mm long. **Leaves:** opposite decussate, simple, sessile with pair leaves fused across node having notch at midpoint of union, without stipules; blade fingerlike, 25–110 \times 5–14 mm, rounded-triangular in \times -section becoming more rounded with age, expanding leaves finely papillate along edge aging entire, bluntly tetrahedral at tip; in \times -section with large ovoid mucilage cells (1 mm long) radiating from midvein. **Inflorescence:** flowers solitary, terminal or axillary, lacking bracts, glabrous; peduncle (pedicel) erect, cylindric, 10–60 mm long, succulent but aging nonsucculent, tough, and persistent. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, 30–50 mm across; **sepals** 4–5(–6), ascending, dimorphic with 2 long sepals and 2 shorter sepals, long sepals 7–10 mm long, \pm leaflike but somewhat flattened at base, shorter sepals 5–6 mm long, with wide pink-membranous margins, acute and succulent at tip (sometimes superseded by membranous margins); **petals** > 30, linear to oblanceolate-linear, 10–25 \times 1.5–3.5 mm, lower surface rose-magenta, upper surface orange-red or rose-magenta or both; sometimes with whitish staminodes; **stamens** many, free; filaments 2–4 mm long, golden yellow to yellow (whitish), inner ones with a cluster of numerous white hairs at base; anthers dorsifixed to versatile, dithecal, 1.2–1.6 mm long, golden yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen golden yellow; **pistil** 1; ovary inferior, sunken in receptacle, 8–12-chambered with many ovules attached to outer wall; styles absent; stigmas = chamber number, tonguelike, yellow, minutely papillate. **Fruit:** capsule, embedded in receptacle, many-seeded, hemispheric, 8–10 mm wide, when dry with valves winged and arched over ovary, upon wetting expanding outward and exposing chambers and seeds. **Seed:** \pm compressed-ovoid, 1 mm long, brown, minutely bumpy. Early December–early June.

Naturalized. A leaf-succulent perennial escaped from gardens and established along coastal bluffs of Malibu, where dense mats of *Malephora crocea* may be found growing with other naturalized Aizoaceae, e.g., at Point Mugu. Its flowers are brilliantly colored; the petals are vibrant rose-magenta on the lower surface and a different, more orangish or red shade on the upper surface. The bi-colored corolla should make it easy to identify, but there are other species of cultivated Aizoaceae having similar flowers, and with which it may be confused.

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