

Malvella Jaub. & Spach

Malvella leprosa (Ortega) Krapov., ALKALI MALLOW, WHITEWEED. Perennial herb, taprooted, many-stemmed at base, decumbent, 10–40 cm tall; shoots having pliable leaves, densely covered with whitish stellate hairs aging \pm tannish. **Stems:** cylindric, 2.5–3.5 mm diameter on young stems, tough. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, petiolate, with stipules; stipules 2, fused to stem at node, linear, 2–8(–10) mm long, densely stellate-hairy; petiole 5–40 mm long; blade distinctly asymmetric, kidney-shaped to roundish, 10–50 \times 10–80 mm, typically length < width, gray-green, shallowly dentate to crenate and often wavy on margins, palmately veined with principal veins conspicuous and raised on lower side, \pm soft. **Inflorescence:** flowers solitary or in several-flowered cymes, axillary, densely stellate-pubescent; bracts and bractlets absent; pedicel to 30 mm long; bracteoles 3 subtending or fused to calyx (less by abscission), linear, 3–6 mm long. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, typically 15–20 mm across, dish-shaped; **calyx** 5-lobed, pubescent; tube 2–3 mm long, stellate-pubescent, internally glabrous; lobes ovate, 4.5–5 \times 2.5–3 mm, acuminate at tip, internally sericeous; **petals** 5, fused to expanded base of staminal tube, twisted in bud, asymmetrically obovate, 10–16 \times 8–8.8 mm, creamy white to pale light yellow, lower surface with stellate hairs on surfaces exposed in bud, rounded and curved inward at base on inner margin, irregularly toothed (praemorse) at tip, ciliate on basal curved margin to midpoint and for ca. 2/3 on fairly straight margin; **stamens** ca. 50, fused into column; tube ca. 4 mm long, free filaments of different lengths diverging to form a \pm conic to hemispheric display of anthers 1–3 mm long, white, conspicuously papillate; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, ivory white to creamy yellow, arched, longitudinally and outwardly dehiscent; pollen creamy white; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, shallowly lobed and broad-conic, pitted on top from which arise styles, light green, densely stellate hairy, 6–10-chambered, each chamber with 1 ovule; styles = chambers, exerted, 6.5–8 mm long, white; stigmas capitate. **Fruit:** schizocarp, of 6–8(–10) dry, 1-seeded segments (mericarps), septicidal; mericarps indehiscent, D-shaped, ca. 3 \times 3 mm, dark brown, bulging below midpoint, with short, broad beak, netted-veined on sides, short stellate-pubescent. **Seed:** blackish.

Naturalized. Perennial herb in range occasionally found as a weed growing in full sun along roadsides, e.g., near the junction of Las Virgenes Road and Mulholland Highway (SMM). *Malvella leprosa* has whitish to tan stems due to dense, stellate hairs, and it produces dainty creamy white to pale light yellow petals, which are unique in range for Malvaceae. Although alkali mallow is a noxious weed elsewhere in California, here it currently is not invasive, probably because locally *Malvella* rarely produces mature fruits, and in dry years the plant may not appear aboveground. If recognized, our populations fit variety *hedacea* (Hooker) K. Schum.

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