

Mentzelia L. BLAZING STAR

Mentzelia micrantha (Hooker & Arnott) Torrey & A. Gray, SMALL-FLOWERED STICK LEAF. Annual, taprooted, rosetted, 1-stemmed at base, branched throughout forming a \pm hemispheric canopy with spreading and ascending branches, erect, 10–80 cm tall, typically height < width; shoots with basal leaves and cauline leaves, densely scabrous with backward-pointing (retrorse) barbed hairs and sparsely pilose-hirsute with upward-pointing (antrorse) barbed hairs (pointed hairs); scabrous hairs mostly 0.1–0.5 mm long (–1 mm long), tapered, slender or stout from a swollen base, clinging with 3–8 whorls of retrorse barbs from the tip downward, appearing pagodalike; pilose-hirsute hairs mostly 2–4 \times > scabrous hairs, minutely barbed or appearing cobblestonelike or warty at 10 \times , mostly slender and long (pilose), some short and stout from blisterlike bases (hirsute). **Stems:** cylindrical, green tinged orange becoming straw-colored or light gray-colored, typically not stripping at base, lower stems brittle, densely scabrous, upper stems pilose and scabrous. **Leaves** helically alternate, pinnately lobed to unlobed, petiolate (basal and lower cauline leaves) and sessile (upper cauline leaves), without stipules; petiole to 15 mm long; blade of lower leaves pinnately 4–6-lobed, lanceolate to oblanceolate in outline, 30–180 \times 16–45 mm, with lobes midway to midrib, of upper leaves usually lobed, lanceolate to elliptic or triangular in outline, 15–100 \times 5–42 mm, with lobes < 1/3 to midrib, tapered (basal leaves) to truncate or cordate (upper leaves) at base, dentate to short-dentate on margins and sometimes entire (upper cauline leaves), acute to acuminate at tip, pinnately veined with midrib whitish and raised on lower surface, upper surface mostly pilose, lower surface densely scabrous, stoutly hispid and scabrous on margins. **Inflorescence:** dichasial cyme, terminal and axillary, with many sessile flowers, bracteate, densely scabrous and sparsely pilose; axes commonly fused with ovary base; bractlet subtending flower leaflike, lanceolate to triangular or widely ovate, 9–50 \times 10–25 mm, at anthesis cupped and equaling flower length, entire to toothed on margins. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, 4.5–6 mm across; hypanthium < 0.2 mm long; **sepals** 5, spreading from rim of hypanthium, short awl-shaped to lanceolate, 1.2–1.5(–2) \times 0.5–0.8 mm, green, acute at tip, mostly pilose; **petals** 5, ovate, 2.5–3(–4.5) \times 1.5–1.8(–2.5 mm), vivid yellow with orange-yellow bases, mostly glabrous but upper surface with several to many hairs at tip; **stamens** 10–20 in whorls of 5, arising from hypanthium, erect, dimorphic; filaments of outer whorl petal-like, 1.6–1.8 \times 0.4–0.5(–0.6) mm, yellow, 3-toothed at tip, with an anther attached to the longer central tooth, filaments of inner 1–3 whorls narrow and tapered, 2.3–2.5 mm long, yellow; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, spheroid, 0.2–0.3 mm, light yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen light yellow; **pistil** 1; ovary inferior, \pm cylindrical, 2.8–3.5 mm long, slightly tapered to base, truncate at tip, with 3 low ribs, 1-chambered with up to 10 ovules attached to outer wall, the chamber triangular in \times -section; style erect, \pm 1.9 mm long, slightly thicker than narrow filaments, yellow; stigma entire. **Fruit:** capsule, dehiscent by 3 valves at top, 2–10-seeded, triangularly prismatic and straight (arching), 6–13 \times 1.5–2.5 mm, mostly pilose; with hypanthium and persistent sepals. **Seed:** triangularly prismatic, 1.9–2.5 \times 0.9–1.2 mm, slightly convex to slightly concave on sides, typically grooved on longitudinal angles, oblique on end walls with 1 end wall concave and slightly beaked, the other end wall \pm convex, faces appearing \pm smooth at 10 \times (short, flat-topped papillae

evident at 40×), mostly light tan and spotted with dark brown or black clusters of cells (sometimes mostly black). Late March–late June.

Native. Annual occasionally found in openings or on burns of chaparral throughout the range. *Mentzelia micrantha* has distinctive foliage that clings tenaciously to clothes (= poor man's patches) because the leaves and bracts are covered with barbed hairs that catch fabric like grappling hooks. Its stems age with a smooth, straw-colored surface. This species has a flower with an inferior ovary and 5 vivid yellow petals, and the filaments of the outer stamens are petal-like.

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