

Parthenocissus Planch. VIRGINIA CREEPER, WOODBINE

Parthenocissus vitacea (Knerr) A. S. Hitchc., WOODBINE, THICKET CREEPER. Woody climber (liana), drought-deciduous, with tendrils, trailing and climbing over low vegetation, trailing shoots to several meters long; shoots essentially glabrous; tendril opposite leaf base, on vegetative shoots at 2 successive node and absent from third node, stemlike but sometimes later becoming an inflorescence by forming flower buds on new forks, unequally forked, in range with 2–3 forks, tips swollen but not bulbous and with glandular blisters on outer curves, the lowest internode initially ± 40 mm long elongating and becoming thickened while coiling around support, other internodes shorter, especially lower forks typically subtended with 3 mm by a stipulelike scale, the lowest scale of tendril 2–2.5 \times 1 mm, often 2-toothed, upper scales typically 1.2–1.5 mm long, scales abscising before tendril matures. **Stems:** low-ridged soon becoming cylindric and brownish red, flexible, internodes 20–110 mm long, somewhat swollen above node; lenticels fusiform and vertical, reddish brown; bark tight and light grayish brown bark. **Leaves:** helically alternate, 1-palmately compound with (2–)5 leaflets, long-petiolate, with stipules; stipules 2, attached to stem at node and barely to petiole, oblong to ovate, 4–7 \times 1.5–3.3 mm, somewhat asymmetric, margins somewhat membranous, acute to rounded at tip, drying papery and abscising before leaf fully mature leaving a linear to slightly curved red scar on stem; petiole (40–)80–200 mm long, pulvinus cylindric to cylindro-conic pulvinus at base; petiolules 1.5–8 mm long, each with 2 spreading to erect wings decurrent from leaflet blade and having a raised midvein on upper side; blades of leaflets ovate or broadly lanceolate to broadly elliptic, in range 40–130 \times 20–70 mm, tapered at base, coarsely serrate on margins, acute to acuminate at tip, pinnately veined with principal veins raised on lower surface, turning dark crimson before abscising during summer drought, upper surface sometimes sparsely short-strigose along principal veins. **Inflorescence:** cyme, opposite leaf at node (as a tendril), many-flowered, axis several-forked forming lateral branches with an ultimate, several-flowered, hemispheric and umbel-like cluster, bracteate, glabrous; bract subtending principal branch or branchlet like scales subtending tendril forks; bractlet subtending minor branchlets and pedicel awl-shaped, to 0.5 mm long, aging brown and abscising before anthesis; pedicel 0.7–3.5 mm long increasing in fruit. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, ca. 4.5 mm across; **calyx** sharply cup-shaped, 0.75–1 mm long, green, subentire or with 1–5 unevenly spaced, low or inconspicuous teeth; **petals** 5, free but tightly abutted forming a caplike bud cover (calyptra), at anthesis spreading and then strongly recurved at base, elliptic to oblong in outline and S-shaped in side view, 3.8–4.3 \times 1.4–2.3 mm, green, thick, with infolded margins, hooded with short inward-facing margins (in bud) becoming outward when open with a downward-oriented hook 0.4 mm long continuous with infolded margins; **stamens** 5, free, opposite petals and in bud each held in place by hook of petal, at anthesis ascending to erect, often falling with petal; filaments 1.5–2.6 mm long, pale yellow-whitish; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, narrowly triangular, 1.3–2.1 mm long, light yellow to yellow, rounded at tip, connective thickish, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen light yellow; **pistil** 1, 2–2.8 mm long; ovary superior, ovoid and weakly 5–6-faceted, yellow-green becoming reddish at base, tapering acuminate into style, 2-chambered, each chamber with 2 ovules attached at base of central (intruded) placentae; style indistinguishable from

ovary, thick conic; stigma terminal, sometimes depressed at top, pale yellow-green, minutely papillate. **Fruit:** berry, 1–4-seeded, in range \pm spheric, 6–8 mm, purple; skin (exocarp) clinging to pulp; pulp thin, juicy, colorless; inflorescence axes strawberry red during fruiting. **Seed:** obovoid heart-shaped, 3.5–4.5 \times 3.2–4 mm, brown, flattened on 1 or 2 sides where next to adjacent seeds, smooth. Mid-May–early July.

Naturalized. Woody climber escaped from cultivation and firmly established in several places close to roads (SMM), including Malibu Creek State Park, SMMNRA Peter Strauss, Griffith Park, and along Calleguas Creek. *Parthenocissus vitacea* has tendrils formed at most nodes (missing at every third node) and coarsely serrate, palmately compound leaves. Flowers of woodbine are nonshowy and lack nectar; they are produced at the beginning of summer so that mature fruits are present midsummer, before the plant goes dormant. In bud each anther is held within the pocket of the petal by a downward-oriented tip, but when the flower opens, the stamens is released and becomes erect while the petals spreads and later becomes recurved. Berries are eaten by birds, and this is likely the dispersal mechanism by which this climber has escaped cultivation, but it remains extremely local and currently shows no signs of becoming an invasive.

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