

Rhamnus L. BUCKTHORN

Rhamnus crocea Nutt., SPINY REDBERRY. Shrub, evergreen, somewhat spinescent, highly branched with dense canopy, 100–350 cm tall; dioecious; shoots with small leaves on short spur shoots, spur shoots soon becoming woody and sharp-pointed; bark smooth, gray.

Stems: branchlets thin, short-tomentose, aging dark red. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, short-petiolate, with stipules; stipules 2, attached to petiole base and stem, acute to awl-shaped, \pm 1.5 mm long, reddish brown, somewhat fleshy, upper part deciduous; petiole 0.7–4 mm long, reddish, short-hairy; blade ovate or obovate to elliptic or round, 4–18(–24) \times 3–13 mm, flat or somewhat cupped on lower surface, broadly tapered to rounded at base, sharply dentate or short-serrate to entire on margins, the teeth generally reddish and deciduous, rounded to obtuse or truncate at tip, pinnately veined with conspicuous midrib raised on lower surface, short-tomentose becoming glabrescent, lower side especially glossy. **Inflorescence:** racemelike, from lower nodes of spring shoots, functionally unisexual, 1–5-flowered, bracteate, short-hairy; bract subtending lateral branch of unexpanded spur shoot, cupped-ovate to awl-shaped, ca. 1 mm long, rose red, deciduous and leaving a ledgelike base; pedicel slender, 0.5–3 mm long increasing 2 \times in fruit (pistillate), green, flexible. **Staminate flower:** radial, 4–4.5 mm across; hypanthium hemispheric to broadly inversely conic, 1–1.5 mm long, green, sparsely pubescent and on outer surface minutely pubescent, thickened near rim beneath filaments; **sepals** 4, spreading, triangular-ovate, 1.5–2 mm long; **petals** absent; **stamens** 4, free, alternate sepals; filaments erect, 1 mm long, greenish or yellowish; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, \pm 0.8 mm long, greenish or creamy yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen creamy yellow; **pistil** vestigial, < 0.8 mm long. **Pistillate flower:** radial, 3–4 mm across; hypanthium hemispheric, 1–1.5 mm long, green, sparsely and on outer surface minutely pubescent, filled with nectar; **sepals** 4, ascending, triangular-lanceolate, 1–1.5 mm long; **petals** absent; **stamens** 4, free, alternate sepals, sterile and vestigial; **pistil** 1, < ascending sepals; ovary superior but appearing inferior within hypanthium, compressed-ellipsoid, green, 2-chambered, each chamber with 1 ovule; style exerted, greenish, 2-branched at midpoint. **Fruit:** drupe, spheroid, 5–6.5 mm, red, 2-stoned; pulp clear yellow; stones obovoid but \pm flattened, 4–5 \times 2.8–3.2 mm, straw-colored, having a fleshy, persistent raphe on 1 side. Late February–late-April.

Native. Shrub fairly uncommon in range but occurring both along the coast and in Wildwood Regional Park (SH), often in mixed stand with scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*). *Rhamnus crocea* has short, stiff branches, making it somewhat spinescent, and it has much smaller leaves than its common cousin, *R. ilicifolia*. Care must be taken to observe both sexes, and the nonshowy flowers are similar except that pollen is not produced in anthers on pistillate plants, whereas pistils do not mature as fruits on staminate plants.

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