

Stephanomeria Nutt. WIRELETTUCE

Stephanomeria exigua Nutt. subsp. *coronaria* (Greene) Gottlieb, SMALL CROWN WIRELETTUCE, WHITEPLUME WIRELETTUCE. Annual, taprooted, green-stemmed (\pm virgate), rosetted, 1–several-stemmed at base, often with an erect main stem and several ascending branches 8–70 cm long, in range 20–110 cm tall; shoots with basal leaves and reduced cauline leaves, becoming leafless during flowering with withered blades, upper branches < lower branches, glabrous to glabrescent (sparsely puberulent); sap milky. **Stems:** low-ridged soon becoming cylindrical, 2–6 mm wide at base of main stem, slender and wiry at branch tips, with 3 veins descending from each leaf or bract, 6–10(–16)-veined with veins becoming obscure on large basal stem, green aging light brown and woody, internodes 4–40 mm long, generally > 15 mm long on lower main stem and lower lateral branches, generally 8–10 mm long on upper portions; pith white, becoming hollow except at base of main stem. **Leaves:** helically alternate, pinnately lobed or often irregularly cut, \pm sessile, without stipules; blade of basal leaves linear to oblanceolate and pinnately lobed, 20–100 mm long, cauline leaves reduced upward, linear and scarcely toothed changing to bracts, with midrib raised on lower surface, glabrous or sparsely short-hairy. **Inflorescence:** heads, solitary or several in short, axillary cymelike clusters along slender main axis and ascending to spreading lateral branches, forming an open, paniclelike array with heads oriented at anthesis to upper side, head ligulate, 10–13 mm across with wide-spreading limbs, in range 4–6-flowered, with only 1 head flowering per cluster and flowers withered by midday, bracteate, glabrous to sparsely puberulent; bract subtending cymes leaflike (lower cauline leaves) to triangular (upper nodes), 2.5–5 \times 2.2–3.5 mm, having 1–2 teeth on each margin, acuminate at tip, commonly shriveled at flowering; peduncle 1.3–2.5(–5) mm long, with 7 or 8 alternate bracts, bracts appressed, deltate to ovate or lanceolate, 0.5–1.4 \times 0.4–0.8 mm, acute to narrowly rounded at tip, glabrous, with 2–5 bracts at top surrounding involucre (calyculus), calyculus bracts appressed, ovate, 1.2–2.3 \times 0.6–1 mm, green becoming tinged or dotted with red, whitish on membranous margins, some bracts swollen and reddish at acute tip; **involucre** cylindrical slightly spreading at tip, 7–7.4 \times 1.5–1.8 mm (spreading to 2.5 mm at anthesis), of 4–6 phyllaries in 1 series, phyllaries narrowly lanceolate, 6–7.3 \times 1.1–1.3 mm, \pm ridged along midvein, membranous and clear on margin (wider on inner, overlapped margins), rounded at tip, some with a subapical swelling, becoming tinged or dotted with purplish red mostly at tip, along midvein, and on margins, in range glabrous on outer surface; receptacle flat, without bractlets (paleae), glabrous. **Flower:** bisexual, bilateral, mostly 3–4 mm across; **calyx (pappus)** in range of 15–20 feathery bristles (plumose), 3–4.1 mm long, whitish, slightly expanded and greenish at base, united at base for < 0.15 mm, minutely barbed or nearly smooth on basal 0.5–0.7 mm, short-plumose above, the plumose lateral hairs ca. 0.3 mm long; **corolla** 5-toothed, 8.7–12.6 mm long, glabrous; tube + throat narrowly funnel-shaped, 2.7–4.9 mm long, 0.7–0.9 mm diameter at orifice, faintly veined, white; limb spreading, broadly spatulate, 6–7.9 \times 2.7–3.7 mm, light purplish pink, faintly 6-veined, tapered at base, truncate and toothed at tip, the teeth deltate to triangular, < 0.4 mm long, glabrous; **stamens** 5, fused to corolla at top of tube; filaments 0.6–0.8 mm long, mostly purplish red but whitish at top; anthers fused into cylinder surrounding style, basifixed, dithecal, exerted, 3.5–3.8 mm long, pale yellowish green at base to reddish purple above, 5-angled, \pm tail-like (caudate) at base,

appendaged at tip, the appendages rounded to acute, ca. 0.15 mm long, thin, translucent reddish purple, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen whitish; **pistil** 1, exerted 1.5–2 mm above anthers ; ovary inferior, prismatic-obovoid, 0.7–0.8 × 0.4 mm, green, 5-angled, glabrous, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; **nectary** = reddish purple rim on top of ovary and surrounding base of style, nectar-producing (morning); style 8.6–11 mm long, 2-branched, whitish to 2/3 becoming reddish purple above, conspicuously upward-barbed above midpoint, the branches stigmatic, linear and recurved, 0.6–0.8 mm long, purplish red but lighter on upper (adaxial) face, minutely papillate-stigmatic. **Fruits:** cypselae, ± oblanceoloid and prismatic, 3–3.1 × 0.6–0.7 mm, 5-sided and 5-angled, cinnamon brown to brownish yellow, sometimes slightly curved, with a narrow groove ± in the middle of each face, smooth or with circular bumps in a single file on each side of groove; pappus of 15–20 feathery bristles (plumose), 3–4.1 mm long, tawny, slightly expanded and greenish at base, united at base for < 0.15 mm, minutely barbed or nearly smooth on basal 0.5–0.7 mm, short-plumose above, the plumose lateral hairs ca. 0.3 mm long. (Late May) Late July–late October.

Native. Annual known from isolated several populations (SMM) but most reliably observed in grassy fields of Westlake Village growing with introduced grasses and native herbs, e.g., *Clarkia purpurea* and *Deinandra fasciculata*. *Stephanomeria exigua* begins blooming in the middle of hot summer drought, when most plants in the grassland have dried up. Our subsp. *coronaria* has a crown of slender flowering branches, and the heads often seem solitary with each head terminal on a slender peduncle less than five millimeters long. Although it is not easy or reliable to identify many taxa of *Stephanomeria* in the field, our individuals of small crown wirelettuce tend to be shorter and less robust than the more common species, and in range the head typically has only four to six flowers per, although more flowers per head should be expected.
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