

*Suaeda* J. E. Gmelin SEA-BLITE, SEEPWEED

*Suaeda taxifolia* (Standl.) Standl., WOOLLY SEA-BLITE. Subshrub (shrub), halophytic, major branches ascending to spreading and often having shorter, condensed lateral branches (later elongating), in range < 80 cm tall, often height << width; shoots with ascending leaves, on rapidly growing shoots leaves overlapping, in range conspicuously short-tomentose, glaucous appearing from a distance as light grayish green. **Stems:** cylindrical, young stems 2–4 mm diameter, pale yellowish green, pubescent, internodes short but variable in length, retaining projecting leaf bases on woody axes (knobby). **Leaves:** helically alternate occasionally interspersed with 1–2 nodes having opposite leaves, simple, short-petiolate, without stipules; petiole  $\pm$  1 mm long and indistinct from blade, semicircular in  $\times$ -section, upper surface glabrous; blade fleshy with upper surface compressed, linear-lanceolate to narrowly lanceolate, 6.5–25  $\times$  1.5–3 mm, the widest at base and gradually tapered to tip, entire, acute at tip, obscurely veined, yellowish green and glaucous, with shorter hairs than stems and cells convex and green beneath surface wax. **Inflorescence:** leafy, spikelike arrays of sessile axillary cymes (glomes), glome headlike and 1–several-flowered, with bisexual and pistillate flowers, bracteate, pubescent like shoot; bract subtending glome leaflike, with petiole to 3 mm long; bractlet subtending flower 1 overlapping 1 bracteole, bractlet scarious and acuminate-triangular, central portion pale brown tinged reddish, with inconspicuous teeth or fringed on margins, bracteole scarious and ovate, colorless, with inconspicuously teeth or fringed on margins, bractlet and bracteole persistent. **Pistillate flower:** radial, 0.6–1 mm across; **perianth (calyx)** 5-lobed, green, short-pubescent; tube cup-shaped, ca. 0.5 mm long; lobes hooded and cupped, 0.6–0.8 mm long, rounded on back, with thin membranous margins; **stamens** absent; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, subspheroid without a neck, colorless, 1-chambered with 1 basal ovule; style 1, exerted, base short, 3-branched, the branches spreading, 0.2–0.5 mm long, purplish red, papillate along inner sides. **Bisexual flower:** radial, 1.5–2.5 mm across, protogynous; **perianth (calyx)** 4–5-lobed, short-pubescent; tube cup-shaped, at anthesis 1 mm long increasing in fruit, green fading in fruit; lobes fleshy at anthesis and in fruit, hooded and cupping anthers, to 1.5 mm long, green or purplish, with conspicuous membranous margins; **stamens** 4–5, fused to perianth tube; filaments compressed front-to-back, 1 mm long, greenish; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, 1 mm long, yellowish green, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen pale green; **pistil** 1, 1.6–1.8 mm long; ovary superior, vase-shaped with short neck having a sunken center, colorless, 1-chambered with 1 basal ovule; style 1, exerted or not, base ca. 0.3 mm long arising in sunken neck, 3–4(–6)-branched, the branches initially ascending,  $\pm$  0.7 mm long, purplish red, horizontal in fruit, papillate along inner sides. **Fruit:** utricle, 1-seeded, conforming to shape of seed but free from it, transparent. **Seed:** subspheroid, 1–1.8 mm, black to red-brown, horizontal and vertical, with smooth seed coat. Mid-September–late October.

Native. Halophytic subshrub growing on edge of salt marsh at Point Mugu and historically present in salt marshes all along the coast of southern California. *Suaeda taxifolia* formerly was treated as *S. californica* var. *pubescens*, and this species is appropriately named woolly sea-blite because shoots, leaflike bracts, and the perianth are pubescent.

The plant is glaucous, and at a distance appears to be light grayish green. Where a leaf abscises, there remains a persistent projection (petiole).

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