

*Tamarix* L. TAMARISK, SALT CEDAR

*Tamarix ramosissima* Ledeb., SALT CEDAR. Shrub or small tree, evergreen, halophytic, highly branched and airy, with arching branches, in range < 6 m tall; shoots with tiny, scalelike, initially overlapping leaves appressed to stem, glabrous, bearing white salt crystals excreted via salt glands. **Stems:** cylindrical, slender and very limber, green, hidden on the youngest twigs by leaves, visible on older axes where internodes elongate; base of young stem conspicuously swollen above junction with older stem. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, sessile, not sheathing stem, without stipules; blade awl-shaped to  $\pm$  triangular-ovate, typically 1–3 mm long, broadly tapered to rounded at base, entire, acuminate at tip, obscurely veined. **Inflorescence:** panicle of racemes,  $\pm$  terminal, 50–380  $\times$  30–230 mm, many-flowered, bracteate; bract subtending raceme narrowly acuminate-triangular, 2–2.5 mm long; raceme 15–60(–70)  $\times$  4–5 mm, with 1.5–2 flowers/mm except naked 2.5–3 mm at base, swollen at base of axis; bractlet subtending pedicel leaflike but less stiff, acuminate-lanceolate, 1–1.9 mm long,  $>$  pedicel, pinkish white; pedicel 0.7–1.1 mm long, in range whitish to light green. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, 1.5–2.5 mm across; **sepals** 5, overlapping, ovate,  $\pm$  0.6  $\times$  0.5 mm, green centrally and pink-membranous laterally, minutely toothed on margins, slightly ridged along midrib; **petals** 5, overlapping, erect, oblong to obovate, 1.5–2  $\times$  0.8–1.2 mm, white or pink to purplish pink, irregularly short-dentate or entire on margins, rounded at tip; **stamens** 5, free, exerted; filaments 2–2.1 mm long, pinkish, attached on the underside and near margin of nectary disc; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, heart-shaped and oblique,  $\pm$  0.5  $\times$  0.6 mm, pink to purplish pink, longitudinally dehiscent  $\pm$  toward the outside; pollen pale yellow; **nectary disc** 5-lobed, slightly cupped, 0.6–0.8 mm across, fleshy, dark purple in bud turning greenish, the lobes alternate with stamens, slightly wider than long, shallowly notched or not, persistent in fruit; **pistil** 1, ca. 2 mm long; ovary superior, narrowly pyramidal and 3-angled, initially white turning green, 1-chambered with 20–30 ovules on a basal placenta; styles 3,  $\pm$  0.2 mm long; stigmas contorted in bud, triangular to rhombic or tongue-shaped,  $\pm$  0.3 mm long. **Fruit:** capsule, loculicidal, 3-valved splitting to base, 2–10-seeded but with other nonfertile, silky seeds, 4–5.2 mm long, encircled by persistent perianth; valves lanceolate, rounded or truncate at tip, deep rose to pink grading to whitish at base. **Seed:**  $\pm$  narrowly ovoid, 0.4–0.5 mm long, yellowish brown or tan, with tip having pappuslike tuft of capillary bristles diverging from a central axis, the central axis 0.5–0.7 mm long, bristles  $\pm$  1.5 mm long, silky white. Early May–mid-July.

Naturalized. Small tree originally from Asia growing along banks in fresh or brackish water near mouths of several creeks in Malibu but also at the Chatsworth Reservoir. The salt crystals excreted by *Tamarix ramosissima* are easily felt when the plant is collected. Although this species is attractive, exhibiting sprays of the pink flowers, tamarisk species are not desirable in any flora because they are potentially invasive. Unfortunately, specimens were planted since 2000 in the Las Virgenes area and may be expected to spread. The coastal, pink-flowered tamarisk is clearly representative of *Tamarix ramosissima*, but recent studies in molecular systematics have found no significant differences with *T. chinensis*, and if these species are eventually combined, *T. chinensis* Lour. is the older and correct name.

B. A. Prigge & A. C. Gibson