

Wigandia Kunth

Wigandia urens (Ruiz & Pavón) Kunth var. *caracasana* (Kunth) D. N. Gibson, ORTIGA. Shrub, large-leaved and coarse-leaved, often having unexpanded axillary shoots with immature leaves clustered and sometimes clasping along stem, to 500 cm tall; shoots densely covered with long, glistening, straight nonglandular and straight, stalked glandular hairs, initially velveteen aging hispid. **Stems:** cylindrical, on new shoots often > 10 mm in diameter, green but covered with stiff nonglandular hairs and glandular hairs 1–2.5 mm long, soon becoming woody, with large, shield-shaped leaf scars, hairs aging hispid to ± stinging. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, long-petiolate, without stipules; petiole thick-cylindric, typically 40–130 mm long, densely pubescent; blade of mature leaves ovate to broadly elliptic, typically (80–)150– > 350 × 65– > 210 mm, tough, cordate at base, irregularly short-dentate to dentate and wavy on margins, obtuse to rounded at tip, pinnately veined with principal veins conspicuously raised on lower surface and the lower principal veins often ± paired, densely pubescent and ± velveteen, upper surface dull and dark green, cobblestonelike, lower surface paler green, hairs typically nonglandular and concentrated in recessed pockets between veins. **Inflorescence:** panicle of cymes, to 250 × 250 mm, having several–10 lateral branches, the lateral branches spreading, each typically forked with 2(3) many-flowered cymes, cyme initially tightly helically coiled opening 1-sided; first fork to 65 mm long; bract subtending only the lowest lateral branch or branches, leaflike but much reduced, velveteen, deciduous; axes and unopened buds (calyx + exposed corolla) with hairs 1–2.5 mm long; cyme 65–120 mm long and ± straight in fruit, densely covered with colorless stiff nonglandular hairs and glandular hairs; bractlets subtending pedicels absent; pedicel 0–0.5 mm long. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, 35–40 mm across; **calyx** deeply 5-lobed, hirsute and glandular-hairy; tube ca. 0.3 mm long; lobes narrowly lanceolate to triangular, 9–10 × 1.8–2.3 mm, green becoming reddish or brownish especially above midpoint, inner surface also densely pubescent with ascending nonglandular hairs; **corolla** 5-lobed; tube bell-shaped and 5-angled, 8.5–10 × (6–)7–8.5 mm, white and producing nectar at the base grading to lavender above and along angles, hairy on patches exposed in bud; lobes spreading, overlapping at base, elliptic, 9–15 × 5.5–10 mm, lavender and darker around starlike center, upper surface convex with margins curved under, rounded at tip, lower surface hirsute and glandular where exposed in the bud; **stamens** 5, fused to corolla tube several mm from base, exserted; filaments 10.5–13.5 mm long, white to pale or light lavender, with glistening, backward-pointing and radiating hairs along most of length, lacking appendages; anthers versatile, dithecal, 6–7 × 2–2.5 mm, yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen creamy yellow; **pistil** 1, at anthesis ± 16 mm long, light green with base glabrous and whitish to yellowish green or brownish, becoming lavender and eventually deep purple; ovary superior, conic-ovoid, ca. 6 mm × 3.5 mm, hairs stiff, whitish but hidden by dense ascending hairs, 1-chambered but appearing 2-chambered by deep intrusion of placentae, with many ovules; styles 2, subequal, ca. 10 mm long, lavender to purplish below stigma, bristly below midpoint, grooved on inner face above midpoint and becoming more deeply grooved at tip where expanding into stigma; stigmas at level of anthers, slightly domed, ± 1 mm wide, green, triangular to ± circular in top view with a T-shaped slit. **Fruit:** capsule (rarely forming in range), loculicidal, many-seeded, ovoid, 4–5 × 2.5 mm, firm, dehiscent from tip downward

by 2 arching valves, densely hispid with ascending, grayish hairs; calyx spreading to ascending. **Seed:** ovoid to tear-shaped, 0.6–0.9 × 0.4–0.6 mm, dark brown or blackish, surfaces deeply honeycombed. Mid-January–mid-May.

Naturalized. Tall shrub that has escaped from cultivation and become naturalized near homes in dense colonies, e.g., in lower Topanga Canyon, along Sunset Boulevard, Sepulveda Boulevard, and Beverly Glen (Brown Canyon). *Wigandia urens* var. *caracasana* originated from Middle America and has many synonyms. This plant has extremely hairy stems and leaves, which are mildly irritating when they are old, but a person may also develop a severe rash as an allergic reaction to the glandular hairs. The lavender flowers of *Wigandia* are very showy and numerous per plant, but only a tiny fraction ever forms seed-bearing fruits.

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