

Asparagus asparagoides (L.) Druce, SMILAX ASPARAGUS. Herbaceous perennial vine, evergreen, twining, rhizomatous and with deep, fleshy tubers, several-stemmed at base, trailing or climbing, having flattened stems resembling foliage leaves (cladodes, phylloclades); shoots often 2-dimensional (plagiotropic), with long internodes and short lateral shoots, the lateral shoots spreading to reflexed, having zigzagged axes (sympodial), glabrous; rhizomes white, with internodes 5–10 mm long and triangular scales at nodes. **Stems:** main axes cylindric, to several mm diameter, tough, wiry; lateral axes more slender, finely 3-ridged, the ridges colorless and descending from each leaf, minutely short-dentate with domelike, rounded teeth; cladodes (flattened branchlets) alternate distichous, leaflike, ovate to lanceolate, 6–42 × 5–19 mm, thin, ± arching backward and downward, satiny green, slightly asymmetric at base, minutely toothed with domelike cells on margins, acute to acuminate at tip, each with a ± compressed, short, petiolelike attachment, parallel-veined with veins radiating from attachment. **Leaves:** alternate distichous, simple and partially sheathing main stem; blade scalelike and whitish membranous, triangular-ovate, 1–2(–4) mm long, lacking spiny spurs at base, entire, gradually tapered and bending downward at tip, parallel-veined and sometimes with greenish midrib, becoming papery and brownish. **Inflorescence:** flowers solitary or in 2-flowered cyme, appearing axillary between leaf and cladode, flower spreading to arching downward on slender pedicel, bracteate, glabrous; bracts 6 (when 1-flowered or 2-flowered), the 2 outermost bracts broadly deltate to ovate, ± 1 mm long and wide, jagged on margins, the 4 inner bracts progressively smaller, lanceolate to oblanceolate; pedicel slender, 4–6.5 mm long, jointed and expanded abruptly at tip to join similarly expanded base of receptacle. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, 5–9 mm across; receptacle ± trumpet-shaped (salverform) with a swollen base, 1–1.3 mm long, green, the axis 0.3–0.6 mm long, the flaring cup ± 0.5 × 1.5–2 mm, with nectar arising from ovary (septal nectaries); **tepals** 6 in 2 whorls, ± monomorphic, linear-oblong, 4.5–6.6 × 0.8–1.3 mm, the outer 3 tepals typically narrower and > inner 3 tepals, ± cupped above midpoint, whitish with green midvein, overlapping and forming a pseudotube at base for ± 2 mm, spreading to recurved above pseudotube; **stamens** 6, fused to bases of tepals, erect to arching outward from pistil; filaments flat and tapered gradually from wide base to tip, 5–6 mm long and free for ± 4 mm, whitish; anthers short-versatile, dithecal, 0.7–1 mm long, orange to pinkish orange, longitudinally and inwardly dehiscent; pollen orange; **pistil** 1, 4–6 mm long, short-stalked; ovary superior, ovoid, 2 × 1.5 mm, green, with 3 faint lines defining chamber septa, 3-chambered, each chamber with 6–8 ovules; style erect, whitish, 3-branched ca. 0.5 mm below tip; stigmas with colorless, spheric papillae. **Fruit:** berry, fleshy, 1–8-seeded, spheric, ± 7 mm, black. **Seed:** subspheric or with 1 or 2 flattened faces (when many seeds crowded within a fruit), 2.5–3 × 2–2.5 mm, blackish, with satiny appearance having minute sculpturing by cell outlines (30×). Early February–mid-March.

Naturalized. Perennial vine native to South Africa, uncommonly cultivated in southern California, which has been discovered recently at two locations, in the shaded vegetation on the ocean side of Malibu Lagoon and in Franklin Canyon (SMM). At Malibu Lagoon, *Asparagus asparagoides* was grown on a fence of neighboring property, and has in only a few years become invasive around the edges of the salt marsh, twining on and sometimes thickly covering shrubs. Birds eat the fleshy fruits and likely dispersed this asparagus to both places. For this genus, the dominant photosynthetic organs are cladodes (flattened, leaflike stems). Although the genus *Asparagus* is generally dioecious, flowers of this species are bisexual, and because a single plant may form fruits and seeds, this species is capable of spreading, and so may be expected elsewhere in the wild.