

Eriastrum sapphirinum (Eastw.) H. Mason subsp. *sapphirinum*, SAPPHIRE WOOL STAR.

Annual, taprooted, 1–several-stemmed at base, with erect to ascending branches, in range 5–30 cm tall; shoots with leaves having spin tips, sparingly woolly and hairs often clumping (floccose), hairy mostly in leaf axils and with dense wool in inflorescence.

Stems: cylindric, to 1 mm diameter, tough, greenish turning purple or reddish brown and becoming tannish at base, floccose to sparsely tomentose. **Leaves:** helically alternate, unlobed to deeply pinnately dissected with 1–4 spine-tipped lobes, sessile, without stipules; blade 8–25 mm long, axis \pm 1 mm wide, terminal lobe to 22.5 mm long, lateral lobes ascending, linear, entire on lobe margins, $1.5\text{--}10 \times 0.3\text{--}0.5$ mm, terminal lobe $>$ lateral lobes, venation obscure. **Inflorescence:** headlike cyme, terminal, typically 1–3(–4)-flowered, flowers sessile, bracteate, woolly with calyx hidden by hairs; bract subtending peduncle of ultimate cyme often unlobed, linear, to 12 mm long; bractlet subtending flower 3–5-lobed, 5.5–8 mm long, terminal lobe not exceeding corolla, green, woolly, lobes erect and spine-tipped, colorless on margins \pm entire length of outer lobes and at base of sinuses between lobes. **Flower:** bisexual, \pm radial, 8–9 mm across; **calyx** 5-lobed, 5–6 mm long; tube 3.5–4.5 mm long, densely woolly, hiding 5 green ribs connected by wide, translucent membranous panels; lobes erect, unequal, linear, 0.5–1.5 mm long for each flower, spine-tipped, the spines typically dark red with a translucent point; **corolla** 5-lobed, trumpet-shaped (salverform), in range 8–12 mm long; tube cylindric, $2.4\text{--}3.8 \times \pm 1$ mm, white; throat funnel-shaped, 1–2 mm long expanding to 1.5–1.8 mm wide at orifice, light to dark yellow; lobes elliptic to oblong, in range $3\text{--}6 \times 1.4\text{--}2.3$ mm, the cleft between lobes differing by as much as 0.3 mm and lobes usually oriented slightly bilaterally, strong whitish at base only and to violet to deep blue above, sometimes with purplish markings in center where color changes from white to violet, sometimes with several darker veins at base, **stamens** 5, fused to corolla throat, fused to throat alternate with corolla lobes, arising at \pm same level on lower throat or ca. 0.5 mm below sinuses of lobes and at different levels; filaments erect, threadlike, 2.2–3 mm long, white; anthers exserted, versatile, dithecal, narrowly arrow-shaped, $2.1\text{--}3 \times 0.7\text{--}0.8$ mm, whitish, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen white; **nectary disc** surrounding pistil, ringlike, low, green; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, ellipsoid, 1–1.3 mm long, green, 3-chambered, each chamber with 1 ovule; style exserted to height of anthers, 7–8 mm long, white, 3-branched approaching tip, with minute glandular hairs; stigmas \pm 0.25 mm long. **Fruit:** capsule, loculicidal, dehiscent by 3 valves, 1–3-seeded, ellipsoid, 2–3.5 mm long, light straw-colored. **Seed:** narrowly ellipsoid to lanceoloid, $1\text{--}1.5 \times 0.5\text{--}1$ mm, straw-colored, with acute ends or \pm triangular acute at tip and obliquely truncate on the opposite end, acute and colorless or whitish on tips or edges at both ends, flattish and broadly grooved on 1 side and convex on other.

Late April–late July.

Native. Annual found occasionally in small and isolated but typically dense populations, characteristically growing in hard-packed soil especially along trails in chaparral of SMM and SH. *Eriastrum sapphirinum* is a comparatively small, woolly plant with slender leaves, but it is highly conspicuous in late spring and early summer when showing its relatively small but stunning dark blue flowers. Our populations tend to have corollas that are on the short side for the species; the anthers on our plants are exserted approximately to the level of the corolla lobes.

B. A. Prigge & A. C. Gibson