

Hesperocnide tenella Torrey, WESTERN NETTLE. Annual, taprooted, 1-stemmed at base, commonly unbranched, erect to spreading, 6–50 cm tall; monoecious; shoots with stinging hairs and soft-puberulent hairs, the stinging hairs needlelike, 1–2.5 mm long, with enlarged basal portion containing irritating liquid, colorless or turning dark purplish red at base and sometimes near tip. **Stems:** 4-sided, 1–3 mm diameter, with raised, rounded edges descending from leaves, green aging rose to purple, tough due to stem fibers. **Leaves:** opposite decussate, simple, petiolate, with stipules; stipules 2 per leaf (4 per node), attached to stem, ovate, < 1 mm long, pale to light green, short-ciliate, deciduous or withering; petiole channeled and slender, to 25 mm long, soft-puberulent and armed with stinging hairs; blade ovate, 10–40 × 8–29 mm, rounded to truncate at base (subcordate), crenate on margins, acute to obtuse at tip, 3-veined or 5-veined from base with principal veins sunken on upper surface and raised on lower surface, the stinging hairs evenly spaced on upper surface, absent or restricted to veins on basal half of lower surface. **Inflorescence:** cymelike, axillary, clustered, extending < 4 mm from stem (to 7 mm in fruit), to 11-flowered, with mostly pistillate flowers + 1–2 staminate flowers at top of inflorescence, without bracts (aborted pistillate flowers often appearing like bracts), soft-puberulent, lacking stinging hairs. **Staminate flower:** radial, ca. 0.6 mm across before stamens released, ca. 1.5 mm wide with spreading stamens; **calyx** 4-lobed; tube short; lobes spreading, cupped-ovate, 0.5 × 0.3 mm; **petals** absent; **stamens** 4, free, opposite calyx lobes, exserted and spreading; filaments 0.6–0.7 mm long, whitish; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, ± 0.3 mm long, whitish, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen whitish to pale yellow; **pistil** sterile, ± chalice-shaped with a thick cup, ca. 0.2 mm diameter. **Pistillate flower:** bilateral, ovate and compressed side-to-side, 0.6 × 0.4–0.5 mm; **calyx** of 4 sepals fused to tip and forming a narrow opening, green, covered with hooked hairs (uncinate); **petals** absent; **stamens** absent; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, lanceoloid, 0.4 mm long, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; style absent; stigma exserted, hair-tufted. **Fruit:** achene enclosed within indehiscent calyx (diclesium); calyx ovate compressed side-to-side, 1.2–1.4 × 0.7–0.9 mm, when falling pale green to tannish, hooked-hairy; achene filling chamber formed by calyx, brownish, papillate on surface, with oily endosperm, sparsely dotted with darker papillae. Late January–early June.

Native. Annual growing in moist slopes in chaparral and southern oak woodland throughout the range except at coastal localities. *Hesperocnide tenella*, which often grows in shade with *Stachys*, is an unpleasant surprise because it produces intense burning of the skin when even lightly touched. Each achene is covered by an indehiscent calyx, and when abscised the fruit often does not appear mature.

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