

Heteromeles arbutifolia (Lindl.) M. Roemer. Shrub to small tree, evergreen, sclerophyllous, highly branched with a dense canopy, 250–500 cm tall; shoots short-villous to tomentose, the hairs whitish; bark gray, fairly smooth, with transverse lenticels, green below surface, becoming fissured on stems > 70 mm diameter. **Stems:** irregularly low-ridged; when first forming with awl-like bud scales to 2.5 mm long; soon having reddish brown periderm. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, petiolate, with stipules; stipules 2, attached to flaring base of petiole and to stem, toothlike to acute, free portion to 2.5 mm long, glandular, green with several teeth and tip red turning black, persistent; petiole cylindric, typically 10–25 mm long, tomentose; blade elliptic to oblong, 30–135 × 10–50 mm, tough and leathery, broadly tapered at base, remotely serrate-dentate on margins with teeth having sharp points typically pointed upward and reddish aging darker, acute to obtuse with point at tip, pinnately veined with midrib raised on lower surface, dull, short-villous to tomentose with light tannish hairs becoming glabrescent, upper surface glossy dark green. **Inflorescence:** panicle of cymes, terminal, many-flowered, ± flat-topped, wider than long, typically 55–120 mm across, with 10 or more principal branches, bracteate; bract subtending peduncle and lower branches leaflike; axes with long, wool-like hairs to tomentose or sparsely so; bract subtending upper branch and bractlet subtending pedicel awl-like, 1–1.5 mm long, red, hairy, deciduous; pedicel 1–2 mm long, sparsely short-villous or tomentose, typically with 2 bracteoles, bracteoles short-threadlike, 0.5 mm long, red, deciduous. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, 7–9 mm across; hypanthium inversely conic, 2–3 × 3 mm, green, smooth, sparsely short-villous, tube fleshy with **nectary**; **sepals** 5, shallowly triangular, ± 0.9 × 1.5 mm, not covering petals in bud, at anthesis pale green or creamy white; **petals** 5, roundish but very irregular in outline to ± 5-sided with rounded corners, 2.5–3 mm, white, wavy on margins, sometimes notched at tip; **stamens** 10, weakly paired and opposite sepals, fused at bases; filaments ca. 1 mm long and wide, tapered to tip; anthers versatile, dithecal, ± 1 mm long, light yellow or peach-colored, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen light yellow; **pistil** 1; ovary ± inferior, densely short-villous, 2(–3)-chambered, each chamber with (1–)2 ovules; styles 2(–3), erect and appressed to each other, greenish; stigmas capitate, greenish, ± triangular to 4-sided, short-papillate. **Fruit:** pome, 1–4(–6)-seeded, widely obovoid to spheroid, 7–10.8 × 6.5–9.5 mm, vivid red (orangey red), becoming glabrescent, truncate at tip with depressed center; calyx lobes fleshy, overarching the pubescent, domed ovary tip; pulp fleshy, orange-yellow. **Seed:** 1/4–1/2-ovoid or spheroid, 3.5–5 × 2.5–3 mm, brown. (Early February) Mid-April–early August.

Native. Evergreen tree occurring commonly throughout the range as a tall element of chaparral, e.g., in association with *Ceanothus* or *Malosma laurina*, and in southern oak woodland. *Heteromeles arbutifolia* flowers mostly in the first half of summer, and its fleshy fruits become vivid red in late fall to be brilliant at Christmas time, drying and fading to brown usually before March. Birds eat the colorful fruits of toyon, and thereby disperse the seeds. Rarely *Heteromeles* is stimulated to flower in late winter after receiving heavy rains.

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