

Loeflingia squarrosa Nutt. Annual, taprooted, many-stemmed at base with stems radiating in all directions, branches repeatedly and unequally forked, dense mat-forming (large individuals), prostrate (short-erect), in range < 5 cm tall; shoots and inflorescence (= most of plant) glandular-hairy but not resinous or viscid to touch, the glandular hairs colorless. **Stems:** cylindric, slightly swollen or not just above each node, 0.8–1.2 mm wide at internode midpoint, conspicuously swollen at lower nodes to 1.6 mm diameter, pale green, internodes < 11 mm long, densely glandular-hairy with radiating hairs. **Leaves:** opposite decussate, simple, sessile and pair fused across node by membranous sheath, sheath continuing as colorless wings on lower blade + persistent and not splitting, with stipules; stipules 2 = each a terminal hair (seta) 0.4–0.6 mm long on each wing; blade spreading to recurved, linear and cylindric above winged base, 2.5–7 × 0.4–0.8 mm, ± fleshy, wings at base 2 mm long, entire, spine-tipped, the spine to 0.25 mm long and colorless. **Inflorescence:** appearing like solitary, axillary flowers but = a leafy dichasial cyme with forked stems of unequal diameters diverging beneath each sessile flower, bracteate, glandular-hairy; bracts 2 per node, spreading to recurved, equal, leaflike. **Flower:** resembling a tuft of green leaves, bisexual, radial, 4–6 mm across with spreading outer sepals; cleistogamous; **sepals** 5, unequal and helically arranged, the outer 2 sepals arching or becoming recurved, the inner sepals ascending, narrowly lanceolate, 3.5–6 × ± 1 mm within each flower, green, spine-tipped, glandular short-villous, often cylindric above midpoint, narrowly membranous and with 2 hairs (stipulelike setae) on basal margins; **petals** absent; **stamens** 3 or 5, free; filaments ± 0.5 mm long, pale green or colorless; anthers basifixed, dithecal, ± 0.2 mm long, yellowish, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen yellowish; **pistil** 1, obscurely stalked; ovary superior, 3-sided ovoid, ± 1 mm long, yellowish green, 1-chambered with ca. 25 ovules attached to central, basal post; style minute and 3-branched, stigmatic on inner face and smooth on outer sides of branches. **Fruit:** capsule, dehiscent by 3 valves at tip, in range several–12-seeded, compressed-lanceoloid, 0.5–0.8 × length of inner sepals, the straw-colored valves recurved at tip, seeds attached to basal post. **Seed:** narrowly ovoid, 0.4–0.6 mm long, tannish blushed reddish brown along 1 side, minutely papillate along grooved edge. Mid-March–mid-May.

Native. An inconspicuous, prostrate, matlike annual occasionally encountered in full sun on sand or sandy soils. Observing this superficially, *Loeflingia squarrosa* may appear to be sterile, but that is deceptive because its flowers have sepals that closely resemble the leaves, and the green plant is actually in full flower. In technical terms, this species has a sylleptically branched shoot design, meaning that there are no buds or resting stage in growth; this results in every vegetative meristem immediately becoming a new shoot. At the same time, every “leaf” forms an axillary flower (functionally a bract or bractlet), so that the entire plant above the basal vegetative nodes is a leafy inflorescence.

Alternatively, many authors prefer to call these solitary axillary flowers. Our populations would be called *L. squarrosa* var. *squarrosa*, if varieties were recognized.

B. A. Prigge & A. C. Gibson