

Melica californica Scribn., CALIFORNIA MELIC. Perennial herb, not rhizomatous, fibrous-rooted, several-stemmed at base, cespitose, ascending to erect, in range 50–100 cm tall; shoots with ascending narrow leaves. **Stems (culms):** ridged, to 3 mm diameter, tough, with internodes 20–100 mm long increasing upward, glabrous; internodes hollow. **Leaves:** alternate distichous, simple with sheath; sheath closed mostly to top of sheath, 83–185 mm long, ridged with the most conspicuous ridge descending from midrib, green between ridges, mostly glabrous but pubescent above midpoint, without lobes (auricles) at top; ligule membranous, triangular, and cut, 2–3 mm long, continuous with 1 margin, glabrous on inner surface and pubescent on outer surface; collar pale green turning purplish red, glabrous; blade linear, 120–200 × 2–3 mm, the widest at base, ± keeled, with inrolled margins becoming cylindrical at tip, parallel-veined with well-defined midrib, mostly pubescent, upper surface densely hairy at base becoming scabrous approaching tip. **Inflorescence:** spikelets, in terminal panicles, panicle condensed and narrowly cylindrical, 170–200 × 6–8 mm, with appressed lateral branches, lateral branches helically alternate, at each node with 3 spikelets per node decreasing to 1 per node approaching tip, spikelets 1–15 per branch, each with 6–7 florets, bracteate, lacking awns; peduncle ca. 175 mm long, mostly enclosed by sheath of flag leaf; rachis ridged and slightly twisted, smooth at base to minutely scabrous approaching tip, glabrous; lateral branches ascending or appressed, straight, 9–45 mm long decreasing upward, the central branch bearing spikelets at base, at middle nodes 1 branch long-stalked, minutely scabrous; stalks of spikelets < 6.5 mm long. **Spikelet:** lanceolate, 7.5–10 × 1–1.5 mm (wider when florets spread), lower 5 florets bisexual and upper 1–2 floret sterile and rudimentary, breaking above glumes; rudimentary flower = inrolled lemma narrowly sausage-shaped or club-shaped appearing terminal on rachilla, rachilla light green; **glumes** 2, unequal, lanceolate, lower glume lanceolate, 5.2–7 mm long, 5(7)-veined, keeled to rounded on back and acute to 2-toothed at tip, upper glume 7.5–8.8 mm long, 5-veined, rounded on back and acute at tip, light green at base and membranous approaching tip and between veins above midpoint, glabrous; callus of fertile floret glabrous; **lemma** of fertile floret elliptic, 7–7.7 mm long, greenish becoming purplish red, rounded on back or weakly keeled, 5-veined, narrowly membranous on margins below midpoint and wider above midpoint, notched to forked at tip, glabrous; **palea** of fertile floret oblanceolate, 4.5–5.2 mm long, 2-veined, 2-keeled, membranous except greenish along keels, keels short-ciliate and minutely hairy between keels. **Flower:** **peianth (lodicules)** 2 but fused, collarlike to trapezoid-shaped and opposite palea, 0.5 × 0.8–1 mm long, fleshy, light green; **stamens** 3, fused at base; filaments threadlike, 3 mm long, pale green; anthers basifixed, dithecal, narrowly arrow-shaped, ca. 2.5 mm long, light yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen light yellow; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, ellipsoid, ca. 0.4 × 0.3 mm, light green to light yellowish green, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; styles 2, exerted at midpoint of lemma, ca. 1.8 mm long, whitish, stigmatic and conspicuously feathery (plumose) above midpoint with stigmatic branches to 0.5 mm long, branches 2–3-forked with short bristles. **Fruit:** achene (caryopsis), ellipsoid-lanceoloid, ± 2.8 mm long, glossy light brown, smooth with fine line on 1 side, slightly collapsed and with short point at tip, with dark brown remnant of flower at base. Early April–mid-May.

Native. Perennial herb discovered in range during spring 2010 in the vicinity of Agoura Hills, occurring in highly disturbed grassy habitats (*Avena*) growing in heavy clay but

mostly around bases of boulders. *Melica californica* is an erect plant with ascending inrolled leaves. Although California melic may at a glance show little resemblance to the other species, because the lateral branches of spikelets are appressed in a narrow panicle, this species has the same sterile rudimentary floret at the tip of the rachilla, which is typical of melics.

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