

Mentha ×piperita L., PEPPERMINT. Perennial herb, rhizomatous, taprooted, 1–many-stemmed at base, erect, 30–150 cm tall; shoots with only cauline leaves, with sessile glandular hairs having colorless, spheric heads, strongly aromatic when crushed. **Stems:** 4-sided, 4-angled, to 7 mm diameter, green; internodes hollow on lower stems and solid with spongy, white pith on upper stems. **Leaves:** opposite decussate, simple, petiolate with pair connected by low ledges across node, without stipules; petiole channeled, 4–25 mm long; blade ovate, 20–80 × 15–55 mm, obtuse to truncate at base, serrate on margins, acute (obtuse) at tip, pinnately veined with principal veins raised on lower surface, glabrous or nearly so and minutely glandular with sunken, spheric heads in shallow pits, lower surface sometimes with scattered short hairs along principal veins (on large blades). **Inflorescence:** spikelike panicle of condensed umbel-like cymes paired at nodes (verticils), 45–65 × 16–20 mm (including peduncle), each cyme ca. 20-flowered, bracteate, glandular on all exposed surfaces as on shoot; peduncle of panicle 15–30 mm long; rachis visible at lower internodes, distinctly 4-sided and 4-angled, nodes ca. 5, internodes to 18 mm long at base reduced to 0.5 mm at top; paired bracts subtending cymes at the lowest node heart-shaped and petiolate, ca. 15 × 14 mm, serrate on margins, acuminate at tip, at the terminal node lanceolate and sessile, ca. 5 × 1.5 mm, entire, acuminate at tip; stalk of cyme to 3.5 mm long at the lowest node to absent at upper nodes, with 2 bracts below the swollen area from which pedicels and bractlets arise, these bracts lanceolate, 3–5 × 0.5–1.7 mm, larger on basal cymes, sparsely short-ciliate on margins approaching tip, acuminate at tip; bractlet subtending pedicel mostly of outer flowers, narrowly lanceolate to linear, 1–3.5 mm long, to 10 per cyme decreasing to 0–several bractlets on upper cymes; pedicel 1.5–2.5 mm long. **Flower:** bisexual, bilateral, 4–5 mm across; **calyx** (4–)5(–6)-lobed, in range 3.5–4.5 mm long; tube slightly expanding approaching orifice, 10–12(–13)-veined, green at base and yellowish green to light green between green veins, sessile glandular-hairy mostly between veins; lobes ± equal, acuminate, 1.2–1.5 mm long, green, sometimes 2-forked, with several short hairs on margins and along midvein; **corolla** weakly 2-lipped, 4-lobed, in range 5–6 mm long; tube tapered funnel-shaped, 3.5–4 mm long, white at base grading to pinkish lavender; upper lip unlobed, 2–2.5 × 1.3–1.5 mm, notched or not; lower lip distinctly 3-lobed, lobes oblong, 2–2.5 × 1.1–1.2 mm, pinkish to light lavender, with sessile glands on outer (lower) surfaces; **stamens** 4, fused to upper corolla tube alternate with lobes, subequal, exerted ± 0.7 mm beyond orifice; filaments 1.3–1.5 mm long, whitish; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, ellipsoid, 0.5–0.6 mm long, rose-colored, with sacs attached at tip to connective and free for 2/3 of length, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen pale to light yellow; **nectary disc** surrounding base of ovary, ringlike, 0.2 mm tall; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, strongly 4-lobed, lobes ellipsoid, ca. 0.3 mm long, greenish, 2-chambered, each lobe with 1 ovule; style attached to ovary base at center of ovary lobes (gynobasic), exerted 1–2.5 mm from corolla orifice, 6.5–7 mm long, same color as corolla, 2-branched near tip, the branches 0.5–0.8 mm long, slightly unequal and spreading or 1 erect and the other spreading. **Fruits:** nutlets, in range typically abortive (4), ovoid, ± 0.25 mm long, dark brown; within persistent calyx and on persistent nectary disc. Early September–late October.

Naturalized. Perennial herb escaped from cultivation and found established in several isolated creek beds of SMM. *Mentha ×piperita*, peppermint, rarely sets fruits, so dispersal

is most likely vegetative, from rhizomes being uprooted and transported during rainstorms. Rachis internodes of this species are reported to be short, but in range the lower internodes are longer than typical, whereas the upper nodes are dense, so that rachis internodes are inconspicuous and hidden by flowers of the cymes.

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