

Papaver californicum A. Gray, FIRE POPPY, WESTERN POPPY. Annual, taprooted, typically several-stemmed at base and branched along main axis, \pm ascending, in range 30–60 cm tall; shoots with basal leaves and cauline leaves; latex cloudy white. **Stems:** \pm cylindrical, to 2 mm diameter, initially sparsely and coarsely pilose becoming glabrescent, glaucous. **Leaves:** helically alternate, pinnately lobed with opposite to subopposite lateral lobes and petiolate (basal leaves) to 3-lobed from base and sessile (cauline leaves), without stipules; petiole winged, 25–40 mm long; blade of basal leaves to 140 mm long, of cauline leaves 30–100 mm long, often broadly winged (10 mm wide) at base, deeply divided to 1.5 mm from midrib, lateral lobes oblanceolate to obovate or ovate and typically lobed again, ultimate divisions entire or with 2–3 broad teeth, pinnately veined with conspicuous midrib raised on lower surface, lower surface sparsely villous. **Inflorescence:** 1-flowered or 2-flowered cyme (often appearing solitary), terminal, each flower on a long pedicel, bud typically somewhat nodding, bracteate; bract subtending pedicel (peduncle) leaflike; pedicel to 300 mm long, initially villous becoming glabrescent, glaucous. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, 15–32 mm across; bud ellipsoid, ca. 8×3.5 mm, notched at tip; **sepals** 2, falling as soon as flower opens (caducous), overlapping, cupped, ± 6 –9 mm long, hooded at tip and continuous with strongly incurved lateral margins, green and with 1 margin narrowly membranous, exposed margin overlapping margin of other sepal, the other margin broadly membranous and forming a short longitudinal groove near tip, overlapped by margin of other sepal, with faint parallel veins, sparsely and coarsely villous; **petals** 4 or 6, spreading as a dish-shaped corolla, petal obovate to oval, in range 9 – 17×6 – 12 mm, often \pm toothed at tip, smooth or appearing crumpled, in range orange to red-orange with white or greenish white at base, surfaces with numerous glistening cells; **stamens** ca. 30, free; filaments ascending and often appressed to ovary, unequal, 3.5–4 mm long within a flower, greenish; anthers basifixed, dithecal, disc-shaped, 0.8–1.1 mm long, light yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen pale yellow; **pistil** 1, 5–6 mm long; ovary superior, oblong-ellipsoid, ca. 2.5 mm diameter, the top of ovary (commonly referred to as the stigmatic disc) at anthesis domed with marginal flaps aging conic and disclike, green, glabrous, 1-chambered with many ovules produced along ± 7 lengthwise placentae on outer wall; styles absent; stigmas = 6 or 7 downwardly radiating arms from a conic center, each arm above a placenta, widening toward the tip, fused laterally to form a disc, the disc 6-lobed or 7-lobed, broadly conic, green and fused to top of ovary centrally, light tan or pale yellow and free from ovary on upper edges, dark purplish, papillate. **Fruit:** capsule, dehiscent by pores beneath flaps of disc lobes, many-seeded, narrowly obovoid, 10 – 16×6 – 8 mm, irregularly bumpy bulging from clusters of seeds, glabrous. **Seed:** kidney-shaped, ca. 0.7×0.5 mm, black, netlike ridged on surface; aril absent. Mid-April–early July.

Native. Annual occasionally observed in range after chaparral is burned or clipped back to the ground. Although fire poppy has been described as having brick red flowers, in our populations of *Papaver californicum* they are best described as either orange or red-orange.

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