

Plantago elongata Pursh, 5-SEEDED PLANTAIN, PRAIRIE PLANTAIN. Annual, taprooted, rosetted, acaulous, scapose with several–many spreading to ascending axillary inflorescences, in range 3–8 cm tall; shoots with spreading to ascending, slender basal leaves, sparsely short-strigose with hairs often not tightly appressed, with long silky hairs at leaf bases. **Stems:** at plant base where leaves attached. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, petiolate, without stipules; petiole flared and flat at base, without obvious distinction between petiole and blade; blade linear, 30–60 × 0.7–4 mm, ± entire to remotely short-dentate on margins with 1–several nipplelike teeth per side, sometimes short-ciliate on margins below midblade, obtuse to rounded at reddish tip, with conspicuous midrib raised on lower surface, sparsely short-strigose. **Inflorescence:** spike, terminal on scapelike peduncle axillary to basal leaf, ovoid, 3.5–5 × 2–2.5 mm, in range 2–14-flowered, flowers subopposite decussate, bracteate; peduncle cylindrical, 0.5–0.6 mm diameter, tough and wiry; rachis short-strigose; bractlet subtending flower strongly cupped and broadly ovate, ca. 1 mm long increasing 2× in fruit, round-keeled, keel green with broad scarious margins aging sometimes tinged red-purple, rounded at tip, concealing flower at pollination. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, ± 0.7 mm across, in range ± closed (cleistogamous); **calyx** 4-lobed, 2 mm long; lobes appressed to ovary, cupped-obovate, ± 1.6 mm long, scarious with herbaceous, green keel, sometimes with purplish spots on margins, glabrous, persistent around fruit; **corolla** 4-lobed, scarious and semi-transparent, mostly whitish tan; tube mostly conforming to shape of ovary, constricted and extending ca. 0.4 mm above ovary into a narrow, 4-sided orifice, with glandlike swellings in orifice below bases of lobes; lobes initially erect, ovate, ca. 0.6 mm long, becoming spreading, persistent; **stamens** 2, alternate with corolla lobes, fused to midpoint of corolla tube; filaments threadlike, 0.25 mm long, colorless; anthers included, dorsifixed, dithecal, ca. 0.3 mm long, arrow-shaped at base, orangish, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen colorless; **pistil** 1, ca. 1.7 mm long; ovary superior, subspheroid (not compressed), 0.5 mm, 2-chambered, each chamber with several ovules attached to center; style becoming exerted, ascending papillate-hairy except at base. **Fruit:** capsule, dehiscent around fruit below midpoint (circumscissile), 5–12-seeded, narrowly ovoid, 2.3–3 × 1.3–1.4 mm, pale brown (immature commonly red-purple above midpoint); lower portion of fruit persistent. **Seed:** fusiform-ellipsoid, ± 1.3 × 0.45–0.55 mm, dark brown, with hilum at midpoint on side, pitted and finely netlike, mucilaginous when wet. Late February–mid-April.

Native. Annual first collected in range by Tarja Sagar mid-March, 2010, growing in hard cracking clay on the flats next to Las Virgenes Reservoir (Westlake Village), occurring there with *Lastenia californica*, *Spergularia marina*, various small annuals, and slender, introduced grasses. *Plantago elongata* has a wide distribution in western North America, occurring in vernal pools as well as on alkali and saline flats. Our form is sometimes recognized as a distinct southern variety or subspecies, *P. elongata* subsp. *pentasperma* Bassett, and formerly was treated by a variety of names, such as *P. bigelovii* subsp. *californica*, which, in comparison with the northern populations, has more seeds per fruit. B. A. Prigge & A. C. Gibson