

Prunus ilicifolia (Hooker & Arnott) D. Dietr. subsp. ***ilicifolia***, HOLLY-LEAVED CHERRY, ISLAY. Shrub or small tree, evergreen, sclerophyllous, somewhat spinescent, highly branched and forming a dense canopy, 100–800 cm tall; shoots with dark green foliage, ± folded upward from midrib, with leaves bent downward and hiding stem on water-stressed shrubs, essentially glabrous. **Stems:** cylindrical, when young reddish brown to grayish brown, with odor of bitter almonds (hydrogen cyanide) when scratched; old bark grayish, fairly smooth, with small horizontal lenticels. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, petiolate, with stipules; stipules 2, attached to petiole base, awl-shaped, < 2.5 mm long, entire or sometimes fringed, with some hairs near base, aging purple and early-deciduous; petiole 4–11 mm long, glands absent; blade ovate to round, 16–65 × 12–50 mm, tough, rounded to cordate at base, spinose-dentate or serrate on margins and often wavy, obtuse to rounded or truncate at tip, pinnately veined with midrib raised on lower surface, becoming glabrescent, upper surface initially glossy aging satiny. **Inflorescence:** raceme or panicle with a central raceme and 2–4 lateral racemes from base, arising mostly from dormant bud prior to vegetative growth, having bud scales at base, each raceme 13–30-flowered, (15–)25–80 × 13–20 mm, flowers ± alternate, bracteate, glabrous to glabrate; bract subtending raceme leaflike but reduced or broadly triangular and 3-toothed at tip; rachis somewhat ridged, glabrous or with widely scattered hairs; bractlet subtending pedicel ± triangular to awl-shaped or cupped-ovate, 0.7–2.6 mm long, light green, deeply 3-toothed with acuminate teeth (basal flowers) to acuminate at tip, sparsely short-ciliate mostly above midpoint, abscising when bud small leaving a raised scar; pedicel 0.2–5 mm long. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, ca. 8 mm across, lightly scented; hypanthium cuplike, 2–3 mm deep, 3–3.5(–4.5) mm diameter, light green below, yellow or yellowish green inside with a white rim, **nectary** producing copious nectar, villous at base around ovary; **sepals** 5, ascending later spreading and reflexed, triangular, 0.8–1.5 mm long, greenish white; **petals** 5, spreading, roundish with narrow base, 1.8–2.5 mm, white, with tuft of villous hairs at base; **stamens** 18–30 in 3 or more whorls on hypanthium rim, free, unfolding outward in several successive whorls; filaments 1–2.5 mm long within each flower, white, tapered to tip; anthers versatile, dithecal, ± oblique or with anther sacs of different lengths, 0.7–1 mm long, pale yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen pale yellow; **pistil** 1, bottle-shaped, 2–3.5 mm long, faintly grooved on 1 side from ovary to stigma; ovary superior, spheroid, 1–2 mm, light green, villous around base, 1-chambered with 2 ovules; style often slightly bent below stigma, whitish, with groove on outer curve of bend; stigmatic area ± horseshoe-shaped to ± triangular, faint yellowish green aging orangish red after pollination, minutely papillate becoming viscid. **Fruit:** drupe, ± dry, with 1 stone 1-seeded, ovoid to subspheric, 15–20 × 11–18 mm, dull red or with yellowish patches; pulp (mesocarp) thin, yellowish, not sweet; stone (endocarp) hard, yellowish white, smooth, with prominent point at tip. **Seed:** bulky, compressed broadly ovoid to somewhat heart-shaped, several mm < and thinner than fruit, easily removed from endocarp, yellowish, with odor of bitter almonds; seed coat papery translucent-brown, with conspicuous, coarsely netlike veins. Mid-November–early June.

Native. Relatively common, evergreen shrub of mostly north-facing slopes of chaparral and in southern oak woodland. Its hollylike leaves resemble those of *Rhamnus ilicifolia*,

which tend to be more yellow-green, but *Prunus ilicifolia* can be rapidly identified by scratching a young stem to get the scent of bitter almonds (hydrogen cyanide gas is released). On a raceme, the flowers more or less open at the same time, after the bractlets have been shed. The fleshy fruits are eaten by coyotes, among other creatures, and so the endocarps (stones) can be observed undigested in its feces.

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