

Sidalcea sparsifolia (C. L. Hitchc.) S. R. Hill, SOUTHERN CHECKERBLOOM. Perennial herb, taprooted or with cluster of roots and rhizome (old plant), rosetted, several–many-stemmed at base, decumbent to ascending, in range 30–90 cm tall; shoots with basal leaves and several widely spaced cauline leaves, stellate-pubescent (to 6-armed), sometimes with individual arms larger and stiff; rhizome to 4.5 mm diameter. **Stems:** cylindrical, to 5 mm diameter, tough, green, internodes 35–160 mm long, with appressed hairs, the hairs hirsute, forked, or stellate. **Leaves:** helically alternate, palmately lobed and toothed with cauline leaves more deeply lobed than basal leaves, long-petiolate, with stipules; stipules 2, attached horizontally to stem, narrowly triangular, 4.5–7.2 × 1–1.5 mm; petiole of basal leaves ± cylindrical, 87–400 mm long, decreasing upward, having 4–6-armed stellate hairs, slender and flexible but tough, somewhat scabrous; blade of basal leaves heart-shaped to kidney-shaped in outline, 38–55 × 50–55 mm, cordate at base, crenate on margins to shallowly lobed, palmately veined with 7 or 8 principal veins from base sunken on upper surface and raised on lower surface, dull, upper surface with forked or primarily 4-armed stellate hairs, lower surface with scattered 4–5-armed stellate hairs and more prominent stellate hairs on veins; blade of lower cauline leaves with 7–8(–9) major lobes, 30–62 × 36–80 mm, with sinuses extending ca. 0.5–0.6 of blade length, the lobes then 2-lobed or 3-lobed with secondary lobes 2-toothed or sometimes 3-toothed, acute to obtuse at tips, of upper cauline leaves deeply 5–6 lobed to almost palmately compound. **Inflorescence:** raceme, terminal and axillary (late-forming), 12–40+ flowered, flowers alternate but often not evenly spaced, flower buds congested and overlapping, at anthesis internodes 6–12 mm long increasing in length and raceme appearing somewhat 1-sided in fruit, rachis elongating to 800 mm long, bracteate, stellate-pubescent; peduncle to 70 mm long; bractlet subtending pedicel of lower flower leaflike, deeply 7-lobed and almost compound, petiole ca. 15 mm long, lobes of blade 18–26 × 2–3.5 mm; rachis with ridge descending from each branch becoming cylindrical on lower portion of internode, tough, stellate-pubescent aging glabrescent, hollow; bractlet subtending pedicel mostly half-sheathing, ± oblong and mostly shallowly to deeply 2-lobed (truncate to notched at tip), 3–3.5 × 1 mm increasing to 5 mm in fruit, tips often red-purple, stellate-pubescent aging glabrescent but sometimes remaining hirsute-ciliate on margins; pedicel ascending, ca. 2–3 mm long increasing 2× in fruit; bracteoles absent. **Flower:** bisexual (upper flowers sometimes pistillate by abortion of anthers), radial, 30–45 mm across; **calyx** 5-lobed, 6.8–9 mm long, densely covered with stellate hairs including scattered longer arms; tube cup-shaped, 2–3 × 3 mm; lobes not overlapping, triangular to narrowly triangular, 4.8–7 × 2–2.5 mm, initially erect and later cupped inward or spreading to arching in fruit, acute to acuminate at tip, mostly 5-veined but with only 3 of the veins raised, stellate hairs more robust along veins; **petals** 5, fused to broad, glossy white base of staminal column, thick-clawed and fan-shaped, 8.5–23 × 4.5–15 mm, light purple (more pinkish in bud) with glossy white claw, with pale purple to whitish veins radiating from claw, the veins raised on both surfaces, white-ciliate on claw margins, truncate and somewhat jagged at tip or sometimes with a shallow median notch, having scattered glandular hairs on lower surface and along truncate tip; **stamens** 30+, monadelphous (all fused part of length) forming a column; tube enclosing styles for 2.5–5 mm, ± 1.3 mm diameter at midpoint, white with scattered white stellate hairs, filament free portions flat, the outer series (half of the stamens) reflexed or arching outward and the inner series ascending; anthers dorsifixed, monotheal with 1 chamber larger than other,

0.4–0.8 × 0.4–1 mm, creamy white or tinged light purple in bud, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen white; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, hidden beneath staminal column, wheel-like and shallowly lobed (= ca. 9 chambers), ca. 1.2 × 2.1 mm, green, short-hairy and glandular-hairy on back, with 1 conic projection per chamber ca. 0.7 mm long leaning inward at base of style and with colorless bristles at tip, each chamber with 1 ovule; styles = chambers, 9–12 mm long, fused as column at base for ca. 1.5 mm, white at base changing above midpoint to pale purple and light purple at tip, above column branches adherent becoming free just below midpoint and ascending through staminal column, linear, adherent and free portions short-villous along inner, stigmatic side, minutely hooked at tip. **Fruit:** schizocarp, breaking into 9–12 dry, 1-seeded mericarps (some usually slender and aborted); mericarp indehiscent, D-shaped, in ×-section wedge-shaped, ca. 2.2 × 1.6 mm, papery and tan to pale brown, rounded and either smooth or veiny on back, essentially glabrescent or sometimes short-scabrous on back and outer edges, with projection at tip of mericarp ca. 0.5 mm long flattened front-to-back and truncate (“beak” but not style), with hirsute or forked-hairs on edges and forked or stellate hairs on projection; sides often veiny. **Seed:** comma-shaped, ca. 1.8 × 1 mm, gray-brown, hard, in ×-section wedge-shaped. Late March–late July.

Native. Perennial herb occurring along runoff channels and bordering rock outcrops in chaparral, coastal sage scrub, or on the edge of riparian woodland, in rocky soil, often in the central SMM on the north slope but also occurring in SH, e.g., at China Flats. *Sidalcea sparsifolia*, which formerly was treated as part of *S. malviflora*, eventually forms old plants with many shoots arising from its rootstock; this belowground structure is difficult to interpret as root, rhizome, or caudex tissue. Using deep roots and often partially shaded by neighboring plants, this plant flowers during springtime except in the driest years and can experience a late bloom if extra rainfall occurs in May. Eventually the plant dies back to the ground. The light purple flower lasts one day and then shrivels, but each flower fairly reliably produces a fruit. However, mericarps of *S. sparsifolia* are heavily predated by larvae, which hatch in place and bore through the sides of the mericarp to consume the seeds.

B. A. Prigge & A. C. Gibson