

Vascular Plants of Williamson County

Boerhavia coccinea – SCARLET SPIDERLING [Nyctaginaceae]

Boerhavia coccinea Miller, SCARLET SPIDERLING. Perennial herb, taprooted, not rosetted, several-stemmed at base, many-branched typically with 1 spreading axillary branch at each node, decumbent, in range to 35 cm tall, on vigorous plant principal shoots to 100 cm long; shoots with only cauline leaves, somewhat 2-dimensional (plagiotropic), nodes widely spaced with internodes >> leaves, at each node leaves unequal (anisophyllous, 1 blade and petiole 1/3 larger), forming a new branch from axillary bud initially of the smaller leaf and the other axillary shoot at node unexpanded, foliage green on upper surface and silvery gray on lower surface (bi-colored), puberulent. **Stems:** cylindrical swollen at top of each internode, to 4.5 mm (mid-internode), to 6 mm (base of internodes), and to 8 mm diameter (node), yellow-green to pale yellow-green, internodes to 115 mm long, uniformly densely puberulent. **Leaves:** opposite decussate, simple, petiolate with pairs fused as 2 narrow ledges across node, without stipules; petiole channeled, 3–16 mm long, green to whitish or pinkish, unequal for leaf pair at each node, densely puberulent; blade ovate, 12–37 × 6–30 mm, truncate or rounded to subcordate or broadly tapered at base, entire and often wavy on margins, broadly acute to obtuse or rounded with minute glandular point at tip, pinnately veined with principal veins somewhat sunken on upper surface and raised on lower surface, upper surface green with minute hairs but some thicker hairs on margins, lower surface reflective and wavelike ridged. **Inflorescence:** compound cyme with condensed headlike clusters of flowers on branchlet tips, terminal or axillary arising from ledge lateral to axillary shoot (peduncle not axillary), many-flowered, of dense clusters mostly of 10–25 small flowers, terminal flower clusters appearing spheroidal and 5–7 mm across, lateral clusters with fewer flowers, bracteate, puberulent and with viscid glandular hairs; fully expanded inflorescence to 6-forked, axes opposite decussate, lower pairs of different diameters and enlarged at base of internode, straight, finely ridged, slender, the longest 55 mm long decreasing upward, green, puberulent with increasing glandular hairs approaching flowers; bracts subtending each fork 2, the lowest sometimes leaflike and anisophyllous, to mm long, decreasing upward to subequal and awl-shaped, 1.3–1.8 mm long; **involucre** of bracts or bractlets subtending clusters of flowers absent; bractlet subtending pedicel ovate, 0.5– 1 mm long, greenish and whitish; pedicel short with flower abscising at top, in fruit < 0.5 mm long. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, ca. 1.5 mm across; **perianth (calyx)** (4–)5-lobed, with green, 5-ribbed, obovoid tube around ovary and funnel-shaped above, especially ribbed with conspicuous, stalked glandular hairs; upper perianth purple-red to magenta, 1.2–1.3 mm long; lobes ascending, acute-triangular, ca. 0.5 mm long, **stamens** 2–3, free; filaments ca. 3 mm long, ± magenta, never straight; anthers dorsifixed, conspicuously dithecal, short-exserted, of 2 spheric sacs, the sacs 0.3–0.4 mm, whitish or tinged pinkish, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen white; **pistil** 1; ovary superior (appearing inferior), ellipsoid, ± 0.4 × 0.25 mm, light green, smooth, glabrous, 1-chambered with 1 basal ovule; style at level of anthers, to 1.5 mm long, magenta; stigma circular platelike attached in center ⊥ to style (peltate). **Fruit:** diclesium, viscid and adherent to flowers and other fruits of cluster, short-stalked, 1-seeded, obovoid-oblongoid somewhat conic at tip, 2.7–3 × 0.9–1.1 mm, reddish, strongly 5-ribbed, with abundant glandular hairs, not papillate; pericarp within persistent calyx oblongoid, 1–1.2 mm long, brown and papery. A. C. Gibson