

Vascular Plants of Williamson County

Hibiscus laevis – HALBRED-LEAF ROSEMALLOW [Malvaceae]

Hibiscus laevis All., HALBRED-LEAF ROSEMALLOW. Shrublike perennial herb, not rosetted, several-many-stemmed at base, principal stems ascending and principal axes not branched below midplant, in range 130–250 cm tall; shoots with only cauline leaves on straight axes; glabrous, immature foliage at shoot tips with inconspicuous, sessile glandular hairs.

Stems: cylindric, to 17 mm diameter, tough, initially light yellow-green or minutely speckled red, internodes 30–62 mm long. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple often 3-lobed with a pair of widely spreading basal lobes, long-petiolate with pulvini, with stipules; stipules 2, narrowly acuminate on persistent, circulate base, 1–2 mm, reddish, with short hairs above midpoint, early-deciduous; petiole 35–88 mm long, basal pulvinus ca. 4 mm long, axis cylindric, tough, terminal pulvinus ca. 6 mm long; blade ovate to narrowly ovate in outline, < 50–125 × 32–72 mm, basal lobes ⊥ leaf axis, triangular to narrowly ovate and often halberd-shaped (hastate), to 50 × 12–20 mm, cordate at base, unequally serrate on margins, acuminate at tip, palmately veined at base with to 9 principal veins, principal veins raised on upper surface and principal and minor veins raised on lower surface.

Inflorescence: flower solitary, axillary, bracteate; pedicel cylindric, 30–50(–75) mm long, tough, with abscission zone just above midpoint, at top with downward-pointing rim (reflexed) 1.5 mm long and white, bearing 13–15 linear bracteoles (epicalyx) ascending next to calyx, 15–18 × 1.2–1.6 mm, green, sparsely short-hairy and with some inconspicuous, subsessile glandular hairs, persistent. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, in range 90–105 mm across; **calyx** 5-lobed, 31–37 mm long slightly enlarged in fruit, green, outer surface glabrous or nearly so, inner surface densely puberulent; tube barrel-shaped, ca. 25 mm long, 15-veined with principal veins raised; lobes ± deltate but acuminate at tip, short-ciliate on margins; **petals** 5, twisted in bud, lower portion fused around ovary to stamens, spreading, obovate, 70–80 × 35–45 mm, lower surface white, upper surface glossy red at base ca. 20 mm, palmately veined with principal veins raised on lower surface, upper surface with glabrous, margins at base thick and ciliate, lower surface basal portion short-pilose extending along principal veins; **stamens** ca. 100, monadelphous (fused into a column) and fused to base of corolla; column cylindric, 35–40 × 4–5 mm, white, at top including 5 erect, triangular appendages, column with sparse glandular hairs; filaments mostly radiating and solitary, 2–3 mm long, white; anthers dorsifixed, monotheical, 1–1.3 mm long, rose to reddish, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen white; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, pyramidal 5-lobed, 8–9 × 5.5–6 mm, pale green, glabrous, 5-chambered, each chamber with 2 stacks each having 6–7 ovules attached to center; style from top of ovary, 5-branched, within staminal column cylindric to 35 mm long, the branches exerted and recurved, 8–8.5 mm, with scattered stalked glandular hairs, stigmas terminal, capitate, hemispheroid, ca. 1.5 mm, white, papillate-hairy. **Fruit:** capsule, loculicidal, 5-valved, to 70-seeded, initially ovoid expanding to 29–35 × 16–21 mm, brown, with ascending, seed-bearing valves with acuminate points, with seeds arranged in 10 vertical files 2 files per valve; calyx papery and disintegrating; bracteoles strongly reflexed below fruit. **Seed:** ca. 6-sided, 3–3.5 × 3–3.5 mm, rounded on outer face, often with 4 flat sided, hilum black somewhat concealed by papery flap, sides covered with dense tufts of brown or reddish brown short hairs (fasciculate).

A. C. Gibson