

Vascular Plants of Williamson County

Houstonia pusilla – TINY BLUEETS, STAR-VIOLET, SMALL BLUET, INNOCENCE, SOUTHERN BLUET, ANGEL EYES, QUAKER LADIES [Rubiaceae]

Houstonia pusilla Schöpf, TINY BLUEETS, STAR-VIOLET, SMALL BLUET, INNOCENCE, SOUTHERN BLUET, ANGEL EYES, QUAKER LADIES. Annual, slender-taprooted, not rosetted, 1-stemmed at base, ± erect with ascending branches in canopy, < 10 cm tall; shoots with only cauline leaves at 2–5 nodes, glabrous. **Stems:** 4-sided and 4-ridged, < 1 mm diameter, with 2 ridges decurrent from each leaf (4 per node), weak, ridge edges sometimes vesicular and aging reddish. **Leaves:** opposite decussate, simple, petiolate and fused at node with stipules; stipules 2 per node, ± triangular, ca. 0.8 × 0.8 mm, nearly colorless, acuminate or 2-toothed at tip, with several orangish, conic glands on margins near petiole; petiole broadly channeled, < 1–5 mm long; blade ovate, 4–8 × 2–4.5 mm, tapered at base, entire, acute to obtuse at tip, inconspicuously veined with only the faint midrib visible, upper surface minutely bumpy, lower surface smooth. **Inflorescence:** cyme, terminal, 1–several flowered, on each shoot paired with a newer cyme branch from the node, with terminal flower eventually pushed to the side and having a pair of axillary cymes, axillary cyme with a pair of leaflike bractlets at 1 node fused by stipules, 1 flower of a pair delayed in developing, bracteate, glabrous; axes 4-sided and 4-ridged, to 0.5 mm diameter, green; bractlet subtending pedicel leaflike by sessile to subsessile, < leaf blade; pedicel 4-sided, 10–25 mm long. **Flower:** bisexual ± radial, 7–9 mm across; **calyx** deeply 4-lobed, scarcely fused at base, green, glabrous; lobes suberect, somewhat unequal, triangular to narrowly ovate, 2.5–3 × 0.7–0.9 mm, pair on broader side wider, on edges with enlarged bases; **corolla** 4-lobed, trumpet-shaped, glabrous; tube flared at base, ca. 2 mm long, white with 4 greenish veins; throat ± cylindric with 4 faint ridges, initially ca. 2.5 mm long and exerted from calyx after anthesis, flaring upper portion cuplike, to 1 mm long, violet to bluish on outer surface, inner surface reddish purple with yellowish starlike pattern pointing to sinuses; lobes initially erect then spreading, ovate to broadly elliptic, 4–5 × 2–2.3 mm, light violet to bluish, upper throat and lobes minutely papillate, lower surface paler, veins inconspicuous; **stamens** 4, attached at top of corolla tube, included; filaments slender, to 0.4 mm long, pale green; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, 0.5–0.6 mm long, light yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen light yellow; **pistil** 1; ovary inferior, strongly 2-lobed with 4 shallow grooved and compressed side-to-side, ca. 0.5 × 1 mm, green, glabrous, 2-chambered each chamber with several ovules; style 0.6–0.7 mm long, 2-branched, lower portion nearly colorless and branches pale green, the branches ascending and at level of anthers, stigmas short papillate. **Fruit:** capsule, with 4 spreading, triangular calyx lobes, to 16-seeded, each half resembling a gecko head, ca. 2.5 × 4.5 × 2 mm. **Seed:** helmetlike, ca. 1 mm long.

A. C. Gibson