Lactuca serriola L., PRICKLY LETTUCE, COMPASS PLANT. Annual, somewhat spinescent, taprooted, rosetted, 1−several-stemmed at base, unbranched below inflorescence or old plants branched from base, ± highly branched in inflorescence, erect, 15−120+ cm tall; shoots with basal leaves and ascending to erect cauline leaves, especially basal leaves dead at flowering, leaves rough and prickly, often grayish green and ± glaucous; latex milky, copious. **Stems:** inconspicuously ridged, to 15 mm diameter, with 2 faint ridges descending from each leaf (sometimes aging as a shallow groove), soon becoming light silver-gray, glabrous or commonly bearing broad-based, radiating prickle (bristles) to 3 mm long; solid. **Leaves:** helically alternate, unlobed or pinnately lobed with 1−3 pairs of lateral lobes, sessile and clasping, stipules absent; blade oblanceolate to obovate (lower leaves) and oblanceolate or oblong to lanceolate (upper leaves), 15−195 × 3−75 mm, clasping with equal or unequal basal lobes to 25 mm long, lateral lobes alternate to subopposite, spreading or somewhat backward-pointing and acute to acuminate at tips, sinuses broad and roundish and typically not reaching midrib, terminal lobe 10−20 mm long, conspicuously toothed with 1−5 small, closely spaced teeth between larger teeth on margins, sometimes ± crisped, the teeth with bristlelike points, pinnately veined with only whitish midrib raised on both surfaces, rough and bristly-hispid to relatively smooth with prickles limited to lower midrib, especially lower surface bristly with abundant prickles along midrib or also principal veins. **Inflorescence:** heads, terminal and axillary, in open, paniclelike arrays, array often forming a spreading lateral branch at each node and secondary (third) axes similarly branched, branchlets cymelike with 1−several heads, head ligulate, 9−11 mm across, of 12−24 flowers, light yellow with darker center, open several hours in morning and withering usually before noon, bracteate, glabrous; bract subtending lateral branch of terminal array appressed, heart-shaped to awl-shaped, to 9 mm long decreasing upward, clasping > 1/2 axis, glaucous, bract subtending axillary array leaflike (= upper cauline leaf); peduncle slender, mostly 3−12 mm long, with small, awl-shaped bracts along axis (= bracts subtending future peduncles); bracts subtending head ca. 8 in 2 series (calyculus), narrowly ovate or triangular and lobed at base, acute and glabrous at tip; involucre cylindric becoming narrowly conic in fruit (afternoon), 8−13 × 8−10(−14) mm, phyllaries ca. 8 in 2 graded series, narrowly lanceolate or sometimes narrowly oblanceolate and rounded to tapering at base, 3−13 × 1.2−2 mm, tapered to a narrowly rounded, puberulent tip, green, glaucous, often tinged purplish red at tips and along midline, with thin white margins, finely papillate on outer surface (especially near tip), venation inconspicuous; receptacle flat, without bractlets (paleae), slightly and narrowly ridged between ovaries. **Flower:** bisexual, bilateral, ± 1.5 mm across; calyx (pappus) of 80−110 capillary bristles, soft and silky white; corolla 4−5-toothed, 8.1−9.3 mm long; tube cylindric, 2.9−5 mm long, pale yellow to whitish; throat ca. 0.2 mm long, white-pubescent to short-tomentose; limb strap-shaped, 5−6 × 1.2−1.7 mm, light yellow to pale yellow sometimes with pink stripes on lower surface, glabrous, teeth shallow; stamens 5, fused to corolla throat; filaments 0.4−0.6 mm long, yellowish; anthers fused into cylinder surrounding style, exserted, basifixed, dithecal, 1.5−1.7 mm long, yellow, tailed ca. 0.25 mm at base, with a sterile, rounded appendage at tip ca. 0.15 mm long, longitudinally
dehiscent; pollen yellow; **pistil** 1; ovary inferior, at anthesis compressed-discoid, ca. 0.5 mm long, light green, narrowly winged on margins, glabrous, with green beak ca. 0.2 mm long, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; style 5–7.8 mm long, 2-branched, with ascending hairs on upper 1.5 mm below branches, the stigmatic branches exserted, ca. 0.4 mm long, spreading and eventually recurved. **Fruits:** cypselae, with pappus in spheric display 11–17 mm across, beaked; fruit body ob lanceoloid to narrowly obovoid and compressed, 2.8–3.5 × 1–1.3 mm, light gray brown mottled with darker gray brown, slightly bowed, 5–7-ribbed, narrowly winged on edges, scabrous-ciliate above midpoint of margin, sparsely scabrous on ribs approaching tip; beak 3.5–4.1 mm long, mostly white but yellowish brown at base and pale green at tip, scabrous on basal portion of beak; pappus of ca. 80–110 capillary hairs, the hairs 4–5 mm long, white, fine, silky, fused at base for < 0.1 mm and forming a thin rim or funnel at top of beak ca. 0.3 mm diameter, each capillary bristle deciduous from rim edge.

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