

Vascular Plants of Williamson County

Sagina decumbens – TRAILING PEARLWORT [Caryophyllaceae]

Sagina decumbens (Elliott) Torrey & A. Gray (if recognized, subsp. *decumbens*), TRAIL PEARLWORT. Annual, ephemeral and wispy, minutely rosetted (winter), finely taprooted, 1-stemmed at base, ascending later decumbent, in range 3–10 cm tall; shoots with tiny basal leaves absent at flowering and widely spaced, slender, diminutive cauline leaves on a fine, weak axis, glabrous. **Stems:** cylindric, to 0.3 mm diameter but slightly swollen above node at base of each internode, bent at nodes (geniculate), internodes < 11 mm long and green or aging red-purple. **Leaves:** opposite decussate, simple and sessile fused across node, without stipules; fused portion sheathlike and concealing swollen stem, to 0.7 mm long, upper portion ascending to spreading, threadlike and hemicylindric, to 8×0.3 mm, < internode, entire, with fine colorless point at tip, venation obscure. **Inflorescence:** cyme, terminal, several-many-flowered, initially 2-forked at each node having a stalked flower and the continuing cyme axis later either with an unexpanded shoots having a pair of bracts or a developing branchlet, with scattered stalked glandular hairs to 0.2 mm long; bracts 2 per node (= 1 bractlet subtending a pedicel + 1 bract), equal and fused across node, leaflike, 1–3.5 mm long, green; principal axis cylindric and stemlike, internodes < 8×0.2 mm diameter; pedicel ascending, straight, to 8 mm long and more slender than cyme axis (0.1–0.15 mm diameter), green, initially with radiating stalked glandular hairs. **Flower:** bisexual radial, in range < 1.5 mm across; **sepals** 4 (lacking petals) and opposite decussate and 5 and helically alternate (having petals), elliptic-ovate, ca. 1.0×0.5 –0.6 mm aging to 1.5 mm and somewhat boat-shaped appressed to fruit, green with narrow membranous margins aging often with purplish acute to obtuse tip, inconspicuously 3-veined from base, with scattered stalked glandular hairs; **petals** 0 or 5, obtuse-ovate, slightly long than sepals, white; **stamens** 4 or 5(10) opposite sepals; filaments upright, in range mostly < 0.7 mm long, translucent; anthers basifixed, conspicuously dithecal, 0.1–0.15 mm long, translucent, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen colorless; **pistil** 1, stalk (stipe) absent; ovary superior, ovoid, green, 1-chambered with many ovules attached along central post (free-central placentation); style 4 or 5, stigmatic, ca. 0.5 mm long, white. **Fruit:** capsule, 5-valved, many-seeded, ovoid, in range 2 – $2.9 \times \pm 1.2$ mm, light brown, valves suberect, obtuse-elliptic, ca. 0.6 mm wide, tannish and stiff, lacking glandular hairs. **Seed:** obliquely triangular with a groove on lower side, in range < 1 mm long, smooth or pebbled or strongly bumpy and with a network of ridges.

A. C. Gibson