

Vascular Plants of Williamson County

Sapindus saponaria – WESTERN SOAPBERRY, WILD CHINABERRY, JABONCILLO
[Sapindaceae]

Sapindus saponaria L. var. *drummondii* (Hooker & Arn.) L. Benson, WESTERN SOAPBERRY, WILD CHINABERRY, JABONCILLO. Small tree, clonal, winter-deciduous, clump-forming, in range to 8 m tall; monoecious; shoots with ascending leaves, with short, curved hairs, not aromatic. **Stems:** cylindric, light brown, densely short-hairy. **Leaves:** helically alternate, 1-pinnately compound with mostly alternate 9–16(–18) leaflets with terminal leaflet absent, petiolate, without stipules; petiole not channeled but with pair of narrow grooves on upper side (not channeled), to 35 mm long, 3-lobed at base, short-hairy; rachis channeled, < 120 mm long; petiolules ca. 1 mm long; blades of leaflets asymmetrically acuminate-lanceolate and straight to somewhat sickle-shaped, < 35–65 × 5–25 mm, the largest 2 leaflets at base, trailing side narrower than leading side, tapered and unequal at base, entire to subentire or inconspicuously low-crenate on margins, acuminate at tip, pinnately veined with midrib raised on both surfaces, with scattered short hairs.

Inflorescence: panicle of unisexual flowers, terminal, with staminate flowers from the base and pistillate flowers above midpoint to tips of branches, to 100 × 70 mm, bracteate; axes puberulent; bractlet subtending flower narrowly acuminate-triangular to awl-shaped, 0.8–1.2 mm long, early-deciduous; pedicel short-hairy. **Staminate flower:** ± radial, ca. 5 mm across; **calyx** 5-lobed; tube short and dishlike; lobes unequal, outer 2 cupped-ovate, ca. 1.1 mm long, mostly, inner 3 lobes 1.7 × 1.1–1.3 mm, green and white, ciliate on margins with short hairs on green tissues; **petals** 5, equal, spreading, clawed, cupped-ovate, 2.5–3 × 1 mm, claw 0.6 mm long, white, limb with long hairs on upper surface below midpoint; **stamens** typically 8, free; filaments spreading, 3 mm long, white, conspicuously short-pilose; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, 0.5–0.6 mm long, light yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen yellow; **nectary disc** beneath ovary and stamens, 2 halves fleshy and tonguelike, dark green, producing nectar at base; **pistil** 1, ca. 1 mm long, sterile; ovary superior, strongly 3-lobed, pale green, 1-chambered; style columnar, from midpoint of pistil continuing to grow. **Pistillate flower:** radial, 2.5–3 mm across; **calyx** 5-lobed; tube short and dishlike; lobes unequal, outer 2 cupped-ovate, ca. 1.1 mm long, green and greenish white above midpoint, inner 3 lobes 1.7 × 1.1–1.3 mm, mostly white, ciliate on margins with short hairs on green tissues; **petals** 5, equal, not spreading, clawed, cupped-ovate, to 2 mm long, claw wider than in staminate flower, greenish white, short-ciliate; **stamens** 8, free; filaments < 2.5 mm long, white, conspicuously short-pilose; anthers sterile, 0.4 mm long; **nectary disc** beneath ovary and stamens, 2 halves fleshy and tonguelike, dark green, producing nectar at base; **pistil** 1, ca. 2.3 mm long, stigma exerted in bud; ovary superior, strongly 3-lobed, 2 mm wide, glossy, glabrous, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; style columnar with 3-lobed stigma, light green. **Fruit:** berry, 1-seeded, spheric, 10–13 mm, reddish brown to orangish tan, broadly heart-shaped with 2–3-lobed when immature; pulp (mesocarp) 1–1.5 mm thick, separating easily from seed. **Seed:** subspheroid, 7.5–9 mm, satiny black to dark ruby red, truncate at hilum, faintly textured, with hard, thick seed coat.

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