

**Vascular Plants of Williamson County**  
*Senecio vulgaris* – COMMON GROUNDSEL [Asteraceae]

*Senecio vulgaris* L., COMMON GROUNDSEL. Annual, taprooted, not rosetted, 1–several-stemmed at base, ascending to erect or nodding (somewhat suntracking), 6–52 cm tall; shoots initially ± cobwebby-tomentose especially at leaf bases and in leaf axils, aging sparsely hairy to glabrate, the hairs loose, colorless, weak, composed of ± elongated beadlike cells. **Stems:** ridged, to 3.5 mm diameter, with 3 ridges descending from each leaf, lower stem often purple, aging glabrescent (glabrate). **Leaves:** helically alternate (the first 2 leaves opposite with pair fused across node), unlobed (lower leaves) and pinnately lobed, ± petiolate (lower cauline leaves) and sessile and commonly clasping (upper cauline leaves), without stipules; petiole weakly defined, to 15 mm long, ± flattened on upper side, winged and grading into blade; blade ovate to oblanceolate or oblong to obovate, (4–)20–100 × (1–)5–20 mm, slightly fleshy, long-tapered at base (lower leaves), rounded to cordate at base with clasping lobes to 5.5 mm long (upper leaves), unevenly dentate and somewhat crisped on margins, lobes deep or shallow, ± opposite to alternate, pinnately veined with midrib conspicuously sunken on upper surface and raised on lower surface, sparsely short-cobwebby (glabrous). **Inflorescence:** heads in cymelike array (solitary), array terminal, ascendingly branched with several–13(–20) heads or unbranched with 1 head (diminutive individual), head discoid, (2–)3–6 mm across, of (13–)40–60+ flowers, bracteate; bract subtending array = dentate or lobed cauline leaf with clasping base; axes green (pinkish), loosely dense-tomentose (glabrous), finely ridged, peduncle 2–25+ mm long; bracts along peduncle to 15, 1 near midpoint, others helically alternate, bracts subtending involucre (= calyculus) narrowly lanceolate to awl-shaped, 1–2.5 mm long, dark purple-tipped to black-tipped; **involucre** cylindrical, (6–)7–9 × (2–)2.5–4 mm, becoming conic or urn-shaped as fruits develop, phyllaries (8) ca. 21 ± in 1 series, linear, (4–)5.5–7.5 mm long, green-striped with membranous margins, at anthesis some dark purple-tipped or black-tipped or all without dark tips, glabrous, with tips arching over and concealing flowers in bud; receptacle flat, bractlets (paleae) lacking, with shallow pits, hollow beneath receptacle. **Disc flower:** bisexual, radial, 0.8 mm across, 5.5–7(–10) mm long, extending slightly beyond phyllaries; **calyx (pappus)** of numerous capillary bristles, ≤ corolla length, thin, silky white, with minute ascending barbs (visible at 30×); **corolla** (4–)5-lobed, 4–5 mm long, glabrous; tube narrowly cylindrical, 2.5–3.5 × 0.25 mm, pale green; throat cylindrical and slightly wider than tube, 1–1.5 × 0.35–0.4 mm, yellow; lobes ± erect, acute, typically 0.25–0.3 mm long, yellow with green veins; **stamens** 5; filament fused to base of corolla throat, ca. 1 mm long; anthers fused into cylinder surrounding style, with tips scarcely exerted, basifixed, dithecal, ± 1.5 mm long, yellow with purplish connective, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen yellow; **pistil** 1; ovary inferior, cylindrical to narrowly club-shaped, ± 1.5 mm long, nearly glabrous, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; style eventually exerted to 0.8 mm (after pollination), 2-branched, the branches spreading and stigmatic, yellow, flattened top to bottom, long-papillate on truncate tips. **Fruits:** cypselae, monomorphic, straight-cylindrical, 2.3–2.6 × 0.3–0.4 mm, red-brown, shallowly 8–10-ribbed, minutely scabrous on ribs; intact pappus mass spheric, colored like dandelion (*Taraxacum*), bristles 4–6.5 mm long.

A. C. Gibson & B. A. Prigge