Senecio vulgaris

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** cylindric, (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 cylindric, 2.5−3.5 × 0.25 mm, pale green; throat cylindric 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 exserted, basifixed, dithecal, ± 1.5 mm long, yellow with purplish connective, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen yellow; **pistil** 1; ovary inferior, cylindric to narrowly club-shaped, ± 1.5 mm long, nearly glabrous, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; style eventually exserted 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-cylindric, 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.

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