# AN ILLUSTRATED KEY TO THE POLYGONACEAE OF ALBERTA 

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This key was compiled using information primarily from Moss (1983), Douglas et. al. (1999) and the Flora North America Association (2005). Taxonomy follows VASCAN (Brouillet, 2015). The main references are listed at the end of the key. Please let us know if there are ways in which the kay can be improved.
The 2015 S-ranks of rare species (S1; S1S2; S2; S2S3; SU, according to ACIMS, 2015) are noted in superscript ( $\left.{ }^{51 ; 52 ; S U}\right)$ after the species names. For more details go to the ACIMS web site. Similarly, exotic species are followed by a superscript $X, X X$ if noxious and $X X X$ if prohibited noxious ( ${ }^{(x ; x X ; X X X}$ ) according to the Alberta Weed Control Act (2016).

Eriogonum



Achenes


## POLYGONACEAE Buckwheat Family



## Key to Genera

01a Dwarf annual plants $1-4(10) \mathrm{cm}$ tall; leaves paired or nearly so; tepals 3(4); stamens (1)3(5).
.Koenigia islandica
01b Plants not as above; tepals 4-5; stamens 3-8
02a Plants large, exotic, perennial herbs spreading by creeping rootstocks; flowering stems erect, hollow, 0.5-2(3) m tall; flowers with both $\delta$ and of parts . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 03
02b Plants smaller, native or exotic, perennial or annual herbs, with or without creeping rootstocks; flowering stems usually $<1 \mathrm{~m}$ tall; flowers either $\widehat{\sigma}$ or $q$ (unisexual) or with both ${ }^{\top}$ and $q$ parts
.04
03a Flowering stems forming dense colonies and with distinct joints (like bamboo stems), profusely branched, green with red/purple speckles; leaves alternate, in a zig-zag pattern on the stem, $5-15 \times 2-10 \mathrm{~cm}$, egg-shaped, with wedge-shaped to squared bases and abruptly sharp, stiff-pointed tips; leaf stalks $1-3 \times \mathrm{cm}$ long, not fleshy . . . Reynoutria japonica xxx [Fallopia japonica; Polygonum cuspidatum]
03b Flowering stems 1 -few per plant, sparingly branched near the top, often striped or suffused with red or pink; leaves mostly basal, leaf blades large, dark-green, heart-shaped to egg-shaped in outline to nearly circular or kidney-shaped, usually $>15 \mathrm{~cm}$ long (up to 60 cm across) with wavy edges; leaf stalks large (often $30-50 \mathrm{~cm}$ long and $\geq 2 \mathrm{~cm}$ thick), fleshy, green to red . . . . . . . Rheum rhabarbarum ${ }^{X}$
04a Leaves without stipules sheathing the stem; flower clusters with a whorl of leafy to scalelike bracts at base; stamens 9 . . Eriogonum
04b Leaves with stipules that encircle/sheath the stem $(\rightarrow)$ (ocreae); flower clusters without a whorl of bracts; stamens $\leq 8$ .05
05a Tepals 6; stamens 6, achenes not winged; inner tepals usually enlarged in fruit. . Rumex
05b Tepals 4-5, stamens 3-8; achenes with or without wings; inner tepals rarely enlarged in fruit (enlarged in some Polygonum or Persicaria species) . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 06

06a Tepals 4, the inner 2 erect and the outer 2 bent back in fruit; achenes lens-shaped, broadly winged $(\rightarrow)$; leaves basal (0-1 on the stem), round to kidney-shaped . . . . Oxyria digyna
06b Tepals 4-5; achenes unwinged or essentially so; leaves mainly on the stem (mostly basal in Bistorta), variously shaped but not round to kidney-shaped .07



## ERIOGONUM Umbrella-plant

01a Plants annual, with diffuse, slender branches; flowers in head-like clusters on slender stalks that bend sharply back/down; rare in seAB grasslands, often on sand

Eriogonum cernuum
01b Plants perennial; stems and flowers not as above; flowers in $\pm$ dense, umbrella-shaped clusters (umbels); mainly mountain species (E. flavum in mountains and grasslands) . . 02

02a Tepals abruptly narrowed and stalked at the base; bracts at the base of the flower cluster leafy

03
02b Tepals neither abruptly narrowed nor stalked at the base; bracts at the base of the flower cluster usually scale-like .05

03a Involucre lobes $\geq 1 / 2$ as long as the tube, usually bent back or spreading

Eriogonum umbellatum
03b Involucre lobes usually $<1 / 2$ as long as the tube, erect. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 04
04a Leaves 1-2 cm long; flower clusters branched once; tepals woolly-hairy near the base
. . . . . . Eriogonum androsaceum (in part)
04b Leaves 3-7(9) cm long; flower clusters branched twice; tepals soft-hairy throughout . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Eriogonum flavum
05a Outer tepals up to twice as wide as the inner ones Eriogonum ovalifolium
05b Outer tepals similar to the inner ones . . . . 06
06a Flowering stems leafy near the base; leaves (2)3-7(9) cm long; tepals whitish-brown to rose coloured; rare in AB, known from Banff NP

Eriogonum pauciflorum ${ }^{\text {\$1 }}$
06b Flowering stems leafless; leaves usually (0.5)1-2 cm long; tepals pale yellow, usually tinged with pink; widespread mountain species.Eriogonum androsaceum (in part)


## FAGOPYRUM Buckwheat

01a Achene faces and angles smooth; tepals (2.5)3-5 mm; tepals creamy white to pale pink, (2.5)3-5 mm long; flower clusters 1-4 cm long, at stem tips and in leaf/branch axils

Fagopyrum esculentum ${ }^{\chi}$
01b Achene faces irregularly wrinkled, angles often curved, wavy or toothed; tepals green with whitish margins, $1.5-3 \mathrm{~mm}$ long; flower clusters 2-10 cm long, in leaf/branch axils

Fagopyrum tataricum ${ }^{\text {X }}$


## FALLOPIA False-buckwheat

01a Plants annual; achenes dull, granular with tiny, wart-like bumps; fruiting tepals hairless or with blunt, nearly transparent hairs, wings rarely present, $0.4-0.9 \mathrm{~mm}$ wide

Fallopia convolvulus ${ }^{\chi}$ . . . . . . . . . . . . .[Polygonum convolvulus] Plants perennial; achenes smooth, shiny; fruiting tepals hairless, with (0.7)1.5-2.1 mm wide wings extending down the stalk, their edges wavy or crinkled (rarely flat) and variously lobed/torn.(rarely smooth).

## Fallopia scandens ${ }^{\mathrm{x}}$ [Polygonum scandens]

## PERSICARIA Smartweed



016 Plants annual terrestrial but often in wetlands; flower clusters spikes, usually several at stem tips and in leaf/branch axils; tepals white or greenish to pink or red 02
02a Tepals dotted with stalkless glands. . . . . . . 03
02b Tepals not dotted with stalkless glands. . . . 04
03a Achenes dull, rough with tiny glands, lensshaped or 3 -angled; tepals without prominent anchor-shaped veinsPersicaria hydropiper ${ }^{X}$
[Polygonum hydropiper]
03b Achenes shiny and smooth, usually lensshaped; tepals with prominent anchor-shaped veins $(\rightarrow)$. . . Persicaria lapathifolia (in part) [Polygonum lapathifolium]

04a Stipule sheaths with coarse bristles; main flower stalks without glands; outer tepals without anchor-shaped veins; achenes lens shaped and 3-sided . Persicaria maculosa ${ }^{X}$
[Polygonum persicaria]
04b Stipule sheaths smooth or with tiny bristles; main flower stalks glandular; outer tepals with anchor-shaped veins $(\rightarrow)$; achenes lens shaped (rarely 3-sided).
. . . . . . . . . . Persicaria lapathifolia (in part)
[Polygonum lapathifolium]


POLYGONUM Knotweed
01a Stems distinctly and $\pm$ regularly 8 -16-ribbed; leaf veins pinnate, secondary veins conspicuous; anthers whitish yellow. . . . . . 02
01b Stems 4-sided, with ribs obscure or absent; leaf veins parallel, secondary veins inconspicuous; anthers pink to purple. 05


03a Leaves all similar (usually); flower stalks 1.3-
02b tepals . . . . . . . Polygonum ramosissimum Flower clusters not spike-like, always in leaf/ branch axils; tepals white, pink or yellowish green, all of similar length; achenes dull, usually not projecting beyond the tepals. . . 03 $1.8(2) \mathrm{mm}$ long, usually covered by the stipule sheaths; flowers closed, constricted just below the tip (urn-shaped); tepals yellowish green, keeled; achenes yellow-green to tan, uniformly covered in small wart-like bumps, covered by the tepals . . . . . . . Polygonum achoreum ${ }^{X}$ . . [Polygonum erectum subsp. achoreum]
03b Leaves varying in size and/or shape (rarely all similar); flower stalks $1.5-7 \mathrm{~mm}$ long, usually extending beyond the stipule sheaths; flowers not urn shaped; tepals white or pinkish, not keeled; achenes tan to light or dark brown, with tiny wart-like bumps in lengthwise lines (sometimes obscure), covered by or extending beyond the tepals .04
04a Plants sprawling to erect, with several branches curving in a zig-zag pattern; leaves green to gray-green, sometimes white with powdery mildew; tepals $1.5-3 \mathrm{~mm}$ long, green or reddish brown with white, pink, or red edges; achenes covered by or extending beyond the tepals

Polygonum aviculare ${ }^{\text {X }}$

## [Polygonum monspeliense;

.Polygonum arenastrum ssp. depressum]
04b Plants erect to ascending, with few branches (not zig-zagged); leaves light green or yellowish, rarely white-with mildew; tepals usually $\approx 3 \mathrm{~mm}$ long, green with yellowish (rarely pale green) edges; achenes covered by tepals . . . . . . . . . . . Polygonum erectum
05a Leaves 3-veined (side veins sometimes inconspicuous), without stalks; tepals uniformly white, pink, or red, pointed at the tip, thickened on the midvein (appearing keeled); achenes light yellow, greenish brown or light to dark brown . . . . . Polygonum polygaloides [Polygonum watsonii ssp. confertiflorum]
05b Leaves 1 -veined, with stalks $0.1-3 \mathrm{~mm}$ long; tepals variously colored but edged with a narrow band of white or pink, rounded at the tip, not thickened on the midvein (except $P$. minimum); achenes black.

06
06a Fruit stalks bent sharply back. ..... 07
06b Fruit stalks erect or nearly so ..... 09


07a Plants green, erect, (5)10-40(80) cm tall; basal leaves shed very early; stipule sheaths (ocreae) 6-12 mm long; tepals and achenes $3-4.5 \mathrm{~mm}$ long; tepal midveins usually branched. . . . . . . . . . Polygonum douglasii
07b Plants green or purplish brown, erect to ascending, $4-15(30) \mathrm{cm}$ tall; basal leaves persistent; stipule sheaths $3-5 \mathrm{~mm}$ long; tepals and achenes (1.2)2-3 mm long; tepal midveins unbranched 08
08a Lower leaves linear to lance-shaped, 10-20(25) $\times 1-3(4) \mathrm{mm}$; leaf edges rolled downward, smooth; upper bracts awl-shaped; flowers produced throughout the plant, nearly to the base; achenes projecting beyond the tepals . . . . . . Polygonum engeImannii
[Polygonum douglasii ssp. engelmannii] Lower leaves egg-shaped, $5-15 \times 4-7 \mathrm{~mm}$; leaf edges flat or narrowly rolled downward, with small teeth tipped with tiny, blunt projections (papillae); upper bracts lance-shaped or oblong; flowers concentrated near the top of the plant; achenes covered by the tepals.

## Polygonum austiniae

. . . . [Polygonum douglasii ssp. austiniae]
09a Plants erect to sprawling; stems with tiny, stiff hairs and rounded projections (papillae), 2-10(30) cm long, <1 mm thick, wiry, often zig-zagged; stipule sheaths (ocreae) $1-4 \mathrm{~mm}$ long; leaves evenly distributed or crowded at branch tips, only slightly smaller near the branch tips, narrowly elliptic to egg-shaped or almost round, $6-27 \mathrm{~mm}$ long, with flat edges; flower clusters broad and flat-topped (cymes) from stem/leaf axils; tepals $1.8-2.5 \mathrm{~mm}$ long, fused for $22-29 \%$ of their length; achenes $1.8-2.3 \mathrm{~mm}$ long . . Polygonum minimum ${ }^{\text {S2 }}$
09b Plants erect; stems smooth, $4-50 \mathrm{~cm}$ long, usually $>1 \mathrm{~mm}$ thick, not wiry; stipule sheaths $4-10 \mathrm{~mm}$ long; leaves evenly distributed, abruptly reduced to bracts near the branch tips, narrowly oblong to lance-shaped and widest above midleaf, 15-45 mm long, with edges rolled downwards (usually); flower clusters narrow and elongating (racemes) $5-15 \mathrm{~cm}$ long, from leaf/stem axils and sometimes at stem tips; tepals (2.5)3-3.5 mm long, fused for 25-40\% of their length; achenes 2.5-3 mm long Polygonum sawatchense ${ }^{\text {SU }}$

## RUMEX Dock, Sorrel



02b many lobes
Sizes and shapes of many plants in this genus vary greatly with varying environmental conditions. The features described in this key reflect characteristics of "normal" plants in their usual habitats.

01a Flowers all or most with either $\widehat{0}$ or $q$ parts; ${ }^{\lambda}$ and $q$ flowers usually on separate plants; flower stalks clearly jointed; leaves arrowheadshaped and/or plants alpine/subalpine . . . . 02
01b Flowers all or most with both $\delta$ and $O$ parts; flower stalks clearly jointed or not; leaves various, if arrowhead-shaped then plants not alpine/subalpine 05
02a Flower stalks jointed near the top; outer tepals bent towards the inner ones; inner tepals 1.2-1.7(2) mm long, without a free wing (or the wing barely visible); tubercles (small wart-like bumps) absent; leaves with (0)2 spreading lobes at the base, smooth-edged, rarely with

Rumex acetosella ${ }^{\text {X }}$ the jointed near the base or near the middle; outer tepals bent sharply backwards (sometimes spreading); inner tepals 2.5-5 mm long, with a free wing wider and longer than the achene; tubercles present at the base of the inner tepals; leaf blades with or without basal lobes .03

03a Leaves broadly lance-shaped, without basal lobes, gradually tapered to the stalk, 3-7(10) $\times$ (0.6)1-3(4) cm; rootstocks thick, vertical, with densely tufted underground stolons

Rumex paucifolius ${ }^{\text {sH }}$
03b Leaves (at least some) arrowhead shaped with downward-pointing basal lobes; rootstocks relatively thin and shallow, horizontal or slightly angled upwards .04

04a Stipules cut into narrow lobes (especially on middle and upper stem leaves); achenes black to dark brown, shiny; leaves oblong-eggshaped to lance-shaped, $>2.5$ times as long as wide

## Rumex acetosa

04b Stipules smooth-edged (sometimes with narrow lobes near the tip); achenes dark brown to brownish yellow, dull; leaves broadly to oblong-egg-shaped, <2.5 times as long as wide

Rumex lapponicus
05a Plants without basal rosettes of leaves; stems branched, with leafy shoots or secondary flower clusters from the upper branch/leaf axils; leaf bases wedge-shaped; inner tepals smooth-edged (sometimes indistinctly jagged near the base in Rumex triangulivalvis) . . 06
05b Plants with basal rosettes of leaves (sometimes not persistent at maturity); stems unbranched, often several from the base, without shoots or flower clusters in branch/leaf axils; leaf bases notched to wedge-shaped; inner tepals smooth-edged or toothed
.08


06a Inner tepals (20)23-30 mm wide, distinctly netveined; rootstocks creeping; leaves $\pm$ leathery; achenes $5-7 \times 4-6 \mathrm{~mm} . .$. . Rumex venosus
06b Inner tepals $<15 \mathrm{~mm}$ wide, not distinctly netveined; rootstocks vertical, occasionally shortcreeping; leaves thin, not leathery; achenes $\leq 2 \times 1.5 \mathrm{~mm}$ 07

07a Flower clusters widely branching, with simple, crowded branches; tubercles absent

Rumex utahensis ©
07b Flower clusters widely to narrowly branching, with first- and second-order branches; tubercles 3 (rarely 1 , and then $\geq 1 / 2$ as wide as the tepal), equal or subequal, much narrower than the tepal, smooth or warty

## Rumex triangulivalvis

08a Inner tepals distinctly toothed; tubercles 3, equal or subequal (rarely unequal in $R$. fueginus)09

08b Inner tepals smooth-edged or with small ( $<0.2 \mathrm{~mm}$ ) teeth; tubercles various . . . . . . . 11

09a Plants with blunt, hair-like projections (papillae) in the flower clusters and on the underside of leaves; clasping stipules present at maturity; flower stalks smooth or with indistinctly swollen joints; inner tepals 1.5-2.5 $\times$ 0.7-0.9(1.2) mm (excluding teeth), with $2-3$ teeth per side; tepal teeth 1-3 mm long, 1.5-2.5(4) times the width of the tepal (teeth rarely short to lacking); tubercles distinctly net-veined/pitted (especially when dry); leaf blades (3)5-25(30) $\times(1) 1.5-3(4) \mathrm{cm},>4$ times as long as wide ..... Rumex fueginus [Rumex maritimus]
09b Plants without papillae or with a few on the lower sides of leaf veins; clasping stipules usually shed by maturity; flower stalks with distinctly swollen joints; inner tepals 3-5(6) $\times$ (2)3-5 mm (excluding teeth), with 2-10 teeth per side; tepal teeth $\leq$ the width of the tepal; tubercles not distinctly net-veined/pitted; leaf blades $<4$ times as long as wide. . . . . . . . 10

10a Plants perennial; leaves oblong-lance-shaped to narrowly lance-shaped, 15-25(30) $\times 2-7$ cm ; leaf edges smooth or with small, irregular teeth, usually curled and wavy; flower clusters dense or interrupted at base; flowers in whorls of 20-25; inner tepals $3-5 \mathrm{~mm}$ wide (excluding teeth), with 4-10, 0.2-1.5 mm-long teeth per side; tubercles 3, distinctly narrower than the tepals

Rumex stenophyllus ${ }^{X}$
10b Plants annual (rarely biennial); leaves oblong, elliptic-lance-shaped, or elliptic-egg-shaped, $3-8(12) \times 2-5 \mathrm{~cm}$; leaf edges smooth, flat to weakly wavy/curled; flower clusters loose and interrupted; flowers in rather dense, separated whorls of 10-20; inner tepals $2-3 \mathrm{~mm}$ wide (excluding teeth), with $2-4(5), 1-3(5) \mathrm{mm}$-long teeth per side; tubercles 1-3, nearly as wide as the tepals Rumex dentatus ${ }^{X}$


11a Flowers without tubercles or with 1 indistinct swelling $<1.3 \mathrm{~mm}$ wide . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 12
11b Flowers with 1-3 distinct tubercles $(\rightarrow$ ) (rarely absent or indistinct in $R$. confertus) . . . . . . 14
12a Flower-stalk joints inconspicuous, not distinctly swollen; flowers without tubercles

## Rumex occidentalis

[Rumex aquaticus var. fenestratus]
12b Flower-stalk joints obvious, distinctly swollen; flowers sometimes with 1 indistinct tubercle or slightly thickened midvein
13a Leaf blades 15-30 $\times 1-4 \mathrm{~cm}$, narrowly wedgeshaped at the base; inner tepals $3-5 \mathrm{~mm}$ wide; achenes reddish brown, 2-2.5 $\times 1-1.5 \mathrm{~mm}$

Rumex pseudonatronatus ${ }^{\chi}$
13b Leaf blades $25-50(60) \times 7-15 \mathrm{~cm}$, broadly wedge-shaped, rounded, or slightly notched at the base; inner tepals (4.5)5-7(7.5) mm wide; achenes dark brown or brown, (2.5)3-3.5(4) $\times$ 1.5-2 mm. . . . . . . . . . . . Rumex longifolius

14a Flowers with 3 distinct $\pm$ equal tubercles; leaf blades $20-55(70) \mathrm{cm}$ long, lance-shaped or oblong-lance-shaped, tapered to a wedgeshaped (rarely rounded or squared) base ... ... Rumex britannica [Rumex orbiculatus]
14b Flowers with 1 tubercle or with 3 unequal tubercles (at least 1 distinctly larger); leaf blades $15-30$ (35) cm long, lance-shaped to broadly egg-shaped, tapered to a wedgeshaped, squared or notched base . . . . . . . 15

15a Plants perennial; leaves $\pm$ triangular, broadly egg-shaped, or egg-shaped-elliptic, blunt to pointed at the tip, deeply and broadly notched at the base; leaf edges smooth to obscurely wavy, slightly irregularly curled; inner tepals nearly circular to kidney-shaped, 6-9 $\times 6$-11 mm; tubercle (0) $1 \ldots$. . . .Rumex confertus ${ }^{X}$
15b Plants perennial or biennial; leaves lanceshaped, sharp-pointed at the tip, wedgeshaped, squared or weakly notched at the base; leaf edges strongly wavy and curled; inner tepals egg-shaped to broadly triangular, $3.5-6 \times 3-5 \mathrm{~mm}$; tubercles (1-2)3, unequal, at least 1 distinctly larger . . Rumex crispus

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| Scientific Name | Illus. Source | Scientific Name | Illus. Source |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Bistorta bistortoides | H\&C | Rumex longifolius | LK |
| Bistorta vivipara | H\&C; LK | Rumex occidentalis | H\&C |
| Eriogonum androsaceum | H\&C | Rumex paucifolius | H\&C |
| Eriogonum cernuum | H\&C | Rumex pseudonatronatus | LK |
| Eriogonum flavum | H\&C | Rumex stenophyllus | LK |
| Eriogonum ovalifolium | H\&C | Rumex triangulivalvis | H\&C |
| Eriogonum pauciflorum | H\&C | Rumex utahensis | H\&C |
| Eriogonum umbellatum | H\&C | Rumex venosus | H\&C |
| Fagopyrum esculentum | BC |  |  |
| Fagopyrum tataricum | LK |  |  |
| Fallopia convolvulus | H\&C |  |  |
| Fallopia scandens | B\&B |  |  |
| Koenigia islandica | B\&B |  |  |
| Oxyria digyna | H\&C | Key to Illustration Sources |  |
| Persicaria amphibia | H\&C |  |  |
| Persicaria lapathifolia | H\&C | $B \& B=$ Britton, N. L. and A. | Brown (1913) |
| Persicaria maculosa | H\&C | H\&C = Hitchcock, C. L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J. W. Thompson. (1955-69) |  |
| Polygonum achoreum | H\&C; LK |  |  |
| Polygonum austiniae | H\&C | LK = Linda Kershaw |  |
| Polygonum aviculare | H\&C | $B C=$ illustrations from the Illustrated Flora of British Columbia (Douglas et. al., 1999), provided courtesy of the Province of British Columbia. |  |
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| Polygonum engelmannii | H\&C |  |  |
| Polygonum erectum | H\&C |  |  |
| Persicaria hydropiper | H\&C |  |  |
| Polygonum minimum | H\&C |  |  |
| Polygonum polygaloides | H\&C |  |  |
| Polygonum ramosissimum | H\&C |  |  |
| Polygonum sawatchense | H\&C |  |  |
| Reynoutria japonica | H\&C |  |  |
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| Rumex acetosa | LK |  |  |
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| Rumex fueginus | H\&C |  |  |
| Rumex lapponicus | LK |  |  |

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