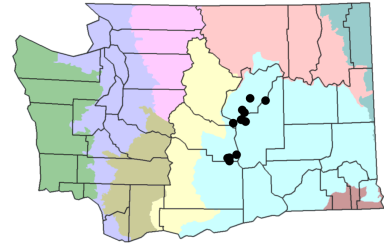


Cryptantha gracilis Osterh.
narrow-stem cryptantha
Boraginaceae - borage family
status: State Sensitive, BLM sensitive
rank: G5 / S2



General Description: Adapted from Cronquist et al. (1972-94): Annual herb 1-3 dm tall; stem single or branched, covered with coarse, stiff, unequal hairs. Leaves scattered along the stem, linear or nearly so, blunt-tipped, 1-3.5 cm x 1-4 mm, and covered with spreading hairs. Hairs on the lower surface, at least, are evidently blistered (pustulate) at the base.

Floral Characteristics: Flowering spikes coiled and compact, only 0.5-2 cm long, never becoming elongate. Calyx almost directly attached to the stem, 2-3 mm long at maturity, and covered with long, white, soft, ascending, straight or nearly straight hairs, often intermingled with bristly hairs. Corolla inconspicuous, white, 1-2 mm wide.

Fruits: Solitary nutlets (or seldom 2-3), smooth, lanceolate, usually with a raised line along the margins. Throughout its range, this species is identifiable from April to July. In WA, it was observed flowering and fruiting May to June.

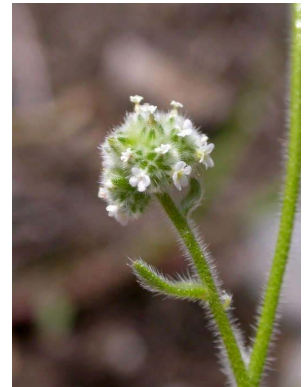
Identification Tips: This species is not in Hitchcock & Cronquist (1973). It is distinguished from other white-flowered annual *Cryptantha* species by the combination of its tightly coiled inflorescence that does not elongate much as the fruits develop, and its usually solitary nutlets. *C. flaccida* is also an annual with solitary nutlets, distinguished by its appressed hairs (versus spreading hairs in *C. gracilis*), and nutlets lacking a raised line along the margins.

Range: WA south to CA, and east to WY, CO, and NM.

Habitat/Ecology: In sagebrush steppe habitats on basalt talus, in dry rocky or silty seasonal drainages, and pockets of silt on steep, somewhat unstable substrates. Elevations in WA: 380-820 m (1250-2680 ft). Associated species include big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), stiff sagebrush (*Artemisia rigida*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), mock-orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*), Carey's balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza careyana*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Sandberg's bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), sulphur lupine (*Lupinus sulphureus*), woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*), and cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*).

Comments: Because this species is an annual, exact population numbers and locations are likely to vary from year to year. This species is also rare in WY.

References: Cronquist et al. 1972-94, vol. 4.



© James Andre



© Katy Beck