



GET TO KNOW THE PLATEAU

Redroot Wild Buckwheat

Eriogonum racemosum

Habitat & Ecology

All across the Four Corners region and Nevada, *Eriogonum racemosum* commonly dots grasslands, dry meadows, oak and pinyon-juniper woodlands, and coniferous forests. It shines white on flats and slopes from 1,200-2,900 meters (4,000-9,500 ft) in elevation. As an adaptable desert herb, it grows well in mesophytic environments with poor soils and in full sunlight. *Eriogonum racemosum* has been observed in many Colorado Plateau parks, including Walnut Canyon National Monument, Grand Canyon National Park, and Bandelier National Monument.

Description

Eriogonum racemosum is a perennial forb in the Polygonaceae (Buckwheat) family. It grows as a grayish-green basal rosette of alternate tomentose, or fuzzy, entire leaves with a woody caudex base. A smooth gray stem emerges erect from the basal rosette in early spring, and an inflorescence of loose spike-like clusters populate the upper half of the stem often by June. Small, creamy pinkish-white flowers bloom throughout the season (until October). The species name, “racemosum” comes from the Latin for “cluster,” which is descriptive of the plant’s flower arrangement of “raceme.”

Conservation Status and Threats



E. racemosum at Mesa Verde National Park/Sydney Gastman

There are no notable threats to *Eriogonum racemosum*, but it is a notable species due to its commonality, benefits to wildlife and medicinal qualities. It is a host plant for Spalding dotted-blue butterflies (*Euphilotes spaldingi*) and Acmon blue butterflies (*Icaricia acmon*).



E. racemosum/Max Licher CC BY-NC

Similar Species

Eriogonum is a richly diverse genus with species still being differentiated. Among genera endemic to North America, *Eriogonum* ranks second with about 230 species, after *Penstemon*. Other common buckwheats found in our Southern Colorado Plateau parks include *Eriogonum ovalifolium*, *Eriogonum umbellatum*, *Eriogonum cernuum*, and *Eriogonum inflatum*, all of which share the characteristics of matted basal leaves with leafless stems and showy clusters of flowers.

Of Note

On the Diné (Navajo) Nation *Eriogonum racemosum* (Bisnideeshchii) is known as “life medicine.” The whole plant, particularly the roots, is used to treat various internal problems including blood poisoning, internal injury, and diarrhea. It is usually taken as a cold infusion. The leaves and stems are eaten and enjoyed raw.

References

- Eriogonum racemosum* -- Earthpedia Plant. Earthpedia. (n.d.). <https://earthpedia.earth.com/plant-encyclopedia/angiosperms/polygonaceae/erogonum-racemosum/>
- Eriogonum Racemosum*. SEINet Portal Network . (n.d.). <https://swbiodiversity.org/seinet/taxa/index.php?taxon=3525&clid=3058>

Written by Sydney Gastman



E. racemosum at Walnut Canyon National Monument /Sydney Gastman