

Stellaria media (L.) Vill.

Standardized Common Name: Chickweed

Other Common Names: Common Chickweed, Starweed

Family: Caryophyllaceae

Taxonomy: *Stellaria* is a cosmopolitan genus of about 200 species, which are often weedy. *Stellaria media* occurs as a weed almost worldwide; it is probably of European origin, but is thoroughly naturalized in North America and elsewhere.

Description: Annual creeping herb. Stems prostrate or weakly ascending, rooting at nodes, narrow, pubescent in lines. Leaves mostly opposite, the lower petiolate with rounded bases, the upper sessile with bases ranging from attenuate to cordate; blade ovate, 0.5–3(–6) cm long, 0.3–2(–3) cm broad; apex acute to acuminate; margins entire. Flowers small, variable; sepals 4–5, ovate, 3–7 mm long, often pubescent; petals 4–5 or absent, deeply bifid, white, 2–6 mm long; stamens 3–10; ovary 1-locular, styles 3(–4). Fruit a capsule, 1-locular, ovoid, opening by 6 valves; seeds 0.8–1.5 mm long, dark reddish brown, bearing small warty protrusions.

Parts in Commerce: Whole herb

Identification:

Stems

- Weak, cylindrical; not 4-angled
- Upper part usually pubescent with hairs growing in 1(–2) longitudinal lines, rarely glabrous
- European material rarely has upper part or all of stem glandular-pubescent throughout; American material never does

Leaves

- Leaves mostly opposite, the lower petiolate with rounded bases, the upper sessile with variable bases; petioles often bear small hairs growing in lines
 - Blade ovate, not linear or lanceolate, 0.5–3 cm long (very rarely to 6 cm)
 - Apex acute to acuminate
 - Margins may be ciliate, otherwise glabrous
 - Taste weak
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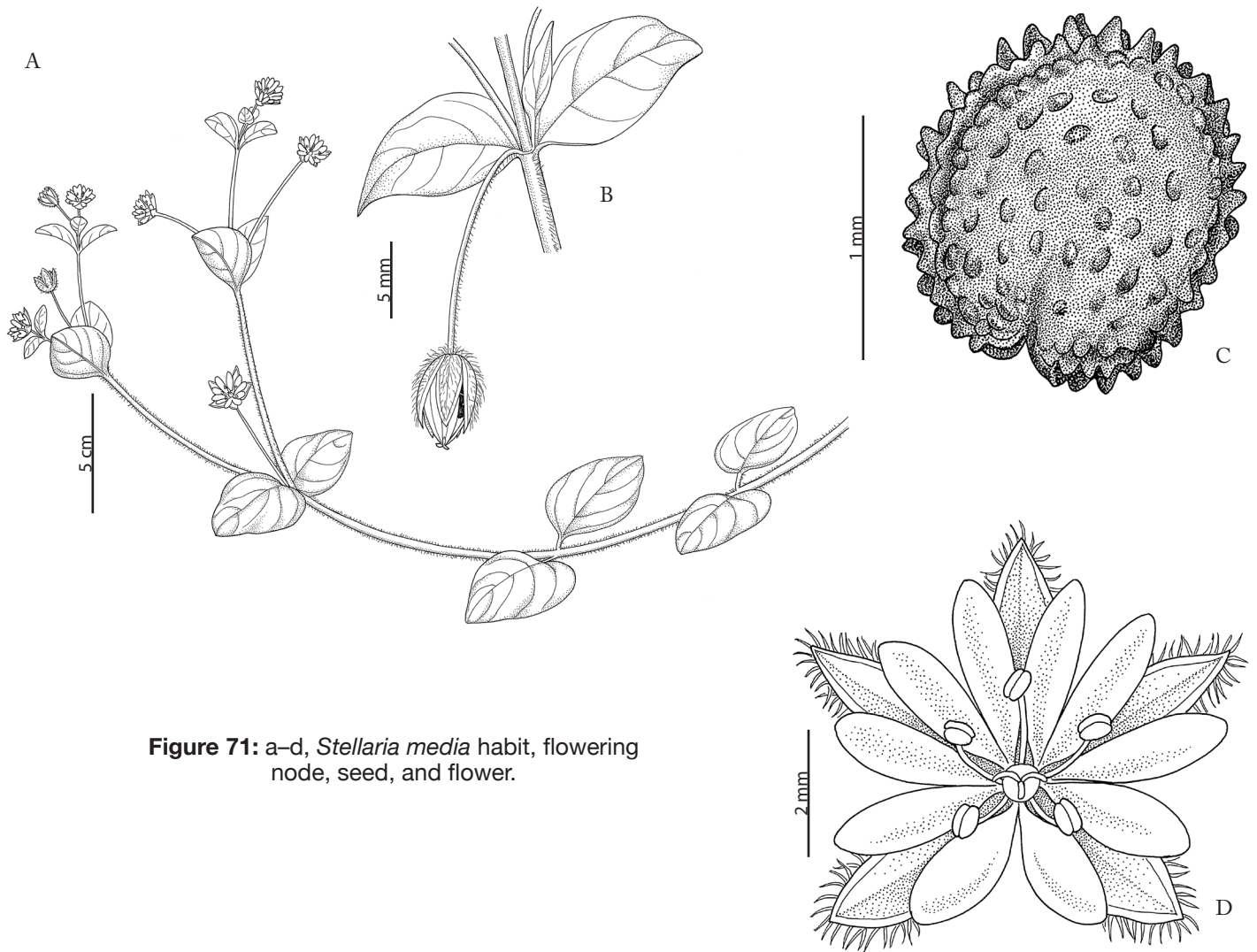


Figure 71: a–d, *Stellaria media* habit, flowering node, seed, and flower.

Flowers

- Growing singly in leaf axils or in short, bracteate cymes; bracts leaflike, not dry
- Pedicels with hairs growing in lines
- Sepals 4–5, 3–7 mm long, ovate, 3-veined, with dry margins, often pubescent at base with long soft hairs
- Petals 4–5, white, 2–6 mm long, cleft almost to base, or petals absent; petals never much longer than sepals
- Stamens 3–10
- Styles 3; not 5 nor 1
- Mature fruit an ovoid capsule, at least as long as calyx; not an elongated linear capsule, nor opening by a lid

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