

Euphorbia glauca

COMMON NAME

Shore spurge, sea spurge, waiu-atua, sand milkweed

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Euphorbiaceae

AUTHORITY

Euphorbia glauca G.Forst.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Herbs other than Composites

NVS CODE

EUPGLA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 20

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD

2004 | Serious Decline

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to New Zealand and the Chatham Islands.

HABITAT

Coastal cliffs, banks and talus slopes, sand dunes and rocky lake shore scarps.

FEATURES

Perennial herb with multiple erect stems up to 1 m tall and underground rhizomes. Stems reddish; leaves alternate, blue-green. Flowers in terminal bunches, each flower surrounded by a deep red cup-like structure with purple glands. Sap a burning milky juice. Flowers are produced from October to February and fruit occur from December to May.

SIMILAR TAXA

The milky sap distinguishes it from many other coastal herbs. The large cigar-shaped leaves and red cups around the flower-like inflorescences ('cyanthia') distinguish this species from other Euphorbia species.

FLOWERING

September to March (sporadic flowering throughout the year can occur)



Tuhua, Otiora Bay, Mayor Island, Bay of Plenty.
Photographer: Gillian Crowcroft



Euphorbia glauca. Photographer: Cathy Jones

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink

FRUITING

December to July

LIFE CYCLE

Pappate cypselae are dispersed by wind and water (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed, cuttings and the division of whole plants.

THREATS

Domestic and feral cattle, sheep, pigs and possums are the major threats throughout this species range, mainly through browse and trampling. Competition from taller vegetation is significant at many sites. Coastal development (e.g., road widening) and erosion are further common threats to most populations. Population fragmentation makes the remnants vulnerable to sudden decline. Some populations on the West Coast of the South Island appear to have succumbed to a fungal disease.

ETYMOLOGY

euphorbia: After Euphorbus, a Greek physician who served King Juba of Numidia in 12BC. Juba named a cactus to honour Euphorbus and later Linnaeus named the entire genus after the physician.

glauc: Bloom has thin powder

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Benham, S. 2001. Field trip to Hauturu little Barrier island March 2001 and a few observations of Waiuatua shore spurge (*Euphorbia glauca*). Auckland Botanical Society Journal, 56: 10-43

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11: 285-309

CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/euphorbia-glauc/>