Ipomoea cairica

COMMON NAME
Pouwhiwhi, coastal morning glory, railway creeper

FAMILY
Convolvulaceae

AUTHORITY
Ipomoea cairica (L.) Sweet

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Dicotyledonous Lianes and Related Trailing Plants

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 30

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. New Zealand: Kermadec (Raoul, Macauley, Cheeseman Islands), Three Kings, North and Great Barrier Islands. Mostly local and the exact southern are now unclear due to this species cultivation well south of apparently indigenous populations, and the subsequently naturalisation from these plantings via garden waste and (sometimes) deliberate plantings. The most likely natural southern limit is the Waitemata Harbour though most literature regards Tiritirimatangi Island as the actual southern limit. Also widespread in Africa, Asia, Australia, western Central America and in many of the Pacific islands of Oceania on some of which it may be naturalised.

HABITAT
Coastal. A local to sometimes abundant vine of dune systems, coastal scrub and cliff face vegetation, rubble slopes and mangrove (Avicennia marina subsp. australasica). Also an occasional urban weed found in waste land, rubbish dumps, car yards and hedges.
FEATURES
Perennial rhizomatous vine. Stems cable like, usually glabrous (rarely minutely pubescent), initially ± smooth and reddish green to purple but maturing grey with the surface becoming conspicuously tuberculate. Leaves with petioles 20-60 mm long, usually falsely stipulate; lamina 30-100 mm long, palmately divided almost to base, ovate to orbicular in outline, 5-7-lobed, lobes lanceolate to elliptic or obovate with outermost lobes sometimes unequally 2-lobed, acute to obtuse, mucronulate. Inflorescences axillary, 1-several-flowered; peduncle 10-80 mm long; pedicels 10-30 mm long. Sepals 4.5-6.0 mm long, ovate, with outer sepals slightly shorter, obtuse to acute, mucronulate, glabrous. Corolla funnelform, purple, reddish-purple or white. Stamens and style included. Capsule c.10 mm long, ± globose. Seeds c.0.5 mm long, subglobose to ovoid, densely, shortly tomentose.

SIMILAR TAXA
Easily distinguished from the other Ipomoea indigenous to or naturalised in New Zealand by the palmately divided leaves.

FLOWERING
September - July

FLOWER COLOURS
Red/Pink, Violet/Purple

FRUITING
September - August

LIFE CYCLE
Seeds are dispersed by wind and water (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Very easy from cuttings, rooted pieces and fresh seed. Inclined to become very aggressive and weedy, so is rarely cultivated. It makes an excellent sand binder and will tolerate extremes of habitat, though it is frost sensitive. In cooler areas if may die back to its root stock if frosted, only to resprout when local conditions warm.

ETYMOLOGY
ipomoea: Worm-like, referring to coiled flower bud
cairica: Of or from Cairo (Egypt)

WHERE TO BUY
Occasionally offered by specialist native plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (9 November 2011). Description adapted from Green (1994)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

CITATION
Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Ipomoea cairica Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ipomoea-cairica/ (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION