

Lycium ferocissimum

COMMON NAME

boxthorn

FAMILY

Solanaceae

AUTHORITY

Lycium ferocissimum Miers

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

LYCFER

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

HABITAT

Terrestrial. A plant of lowland and coastal habitats. A plant of low fertility sites. The plant occurs in sites with stony ground and gravel, as well as ungrazed areas. A plant that occurs in sand dunes. Other sites that the plant occurs are shrublands, coastal scrub (Porteus 1993) and other coastal area as well as scrub on cliffs, banks and roadsides. A plant of coastal shrublands and disturbed waste places.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Densely branched evergreen shrub, 1~6m high. Shoots and young leaves with minute glandular scales. Leaves subsessile or shortly petiolate, alternate on young shoots but on mature stems mostly in fascicles on short spurs along the rigid branch spines. Lamina 5~43 x 3~12mm, oblong, linear-oblong or spatulate; base attenuate; apex rounded-truncate. Flowers 1~2 together, on short spurs. Pedicels slender, around 5mm long at flowering, to 2cm long at fruiting. Calyx 4~8mm long, tubular-campanulate; teeth triangular, obtuse to acute. Corolla 10~13mm long; tube broad-cylindric; lobes 4~5mm long, obovate, pale mauve or cream; apex rounded. Filaments hairy at base. Fruit 5~12mm diam., globular or obovoid, scarlet.

SIMILAR TAXA

Boxthorn is an evergreen erect densely branched shrub with sharp thorns. The plant is from 1-6 m in height. The shoots and young leaves have minute glandular scales (Webb et. al. 1988). Leaves on young shoots are alternate, on mature stems the leaves are mostly clustered on short spurs along rigid spine like branches. The leaves are pale grey-green to yellowish green and up to 4cm X 1cm in area. Flowers occur, 1-2 (3) together, on slender stalks (5mm) that elongate to 2 cm when fruiting. The plant has a bright red, globular berry that is up to 1cm in diameter and is possibly poisonous.

FLOWERING

July, August, September, October, November, December, January, February, March



Lycium ferocissimum. Photographer: Auckland Regional Council, Licence: Public domain.



Pekapeka Beach. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 01/12/2008, Licence: CC BY.

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Violet/Purple

LIFE CYCLE

Perennial. Any cut branches regrow if left touching the surface. Birds disperse seed.

YEAR NATURALISED

1897

ORIGIN

S Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Agricultural

TOLERANCES

The plant is tolerant to drought and intolerant to shade. A plant that is tolerant of salt spray. Requires low to medium soil fertility (Atkinson 1997).

POISONOUS PLANT:

In the Poisonous plants of California by Thomas Fuller et al. they note that although the fruit is edible it has been suspected of poisoning humans and pigs and in humans has produced a narcotic effect. They also note the spines are mildly poisonous.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lycium-ferocissimum/>