



Hibiscus diversifolius subsp. *diversifolius*

Common Name(s):

Native hibiscus, swamp hibiscus, prickly hibiscus

Current Threat Status (2012):

Threatened - Nationally Critical

Distribution:

Indigenous. In New Zealand this species has apparently always been restricted to the northern most extremity of the North Island (from about Reef Point and Doubtless Bay north). The largest populations known occur on the eastern side of Te Pahi. However, several of these owe to their origins to deliberate plantings by conservation minded locals. Outside New Zealand this species is also known from tropical Africa, Australia, New Guinea, the Philippines, many Pacific Islands and Central and South America. New Zealand plants match subsp. *diversifolius*.

Habitat:

Coastal wetlands and streamsides. Often growing amongst raupo (*Typha orientalis* C.B.Presl) at the back of dune slacks or close to brackish streams. Very rarely in gumland scrub or on ultramafic rubble.

Features*:

Semi-erect, erect or prostrate, widely spreading, much branched subshrub or shrub typically forming dense intertangled thickets up to 2 × 3 m, or creeping masses. Stems stout and woody, especially near base. Young branches and leaf petioles copiously clad in numerous small, sharp, 1–2 mm conical prickles and dense, fine stellate hairs. Petioles up to 80 mm long. Leaves 50–100 × 30–80 mm, lamina ovate, orbicular to suborbicular, shallowly to deeply palmately 3–5-lobed, broadly to shallowly cordate or truncate, margins irregularly crenate–dentate to dentate–serrate, upper surface sparsely hispid hairy, undersides often densely so. Inflorescences in 5–20-flowered (sometimes more) terminal apparent racemes. Flowers 50–80 mm diameter; pedicels 1–3 mm long, prickly. Epicalyx segments 7–12, narrowly lanceolate, 8–12 mm long, shortly connate at base, hispid. Calyx 7–12 mm long, densely clad in hispid or stiff straight hyaline hairs, lobes narrowly deltoid to lanceolate, c. 10 mm long. Petals 35–40 × 50–58 mm, obovate, pale lemon–yellow, with a dark maroon base. Capsule 20 × 20 mm, ovoid, clad in long stiff hairs. Seeds 3.6–5.0 mm long, reniform to irregularly triangular, pale to dark brown or black-brown, sometimes with paler stripes, surface glabrous, smooth or irregular.

Flowering:

September - April (but sporadic flowering may occur at anytime of the year)

Fruiting:

October to May (but fruit may be found at anytime of the year)

Threats:

This species is under severe threat from the actions of browsing animals, particularly wild cattle and horses which greedily devour it wherever they can find accessible plants. Some populations at Tokerau Beach have been eliminated by coastal housing development.

*Attribution:

Fact Sheet Prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2009). Description by P.J. de Lange subsequently published in de Lange et al (2010).

References and further reading:

de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Norton, D.A.; Rolfe, J.R.; Sawyer, J.W.D. 2010: Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch.

Johnson, A. T. and Smith, H. A (1986). Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning. Landsman Bookshop Ltd: Buckenhill, UK.

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

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=108



Caption: *Hibiscus diversifolius* flower at Tauroa Point

Photographer: Bill Campbell



Caption: *Hibiscus diversifolius* growing in wetland at Tauroa Point

Photographer: Bill Campbell