



Tetragonia tetragonoides

Common Name(s):

kokihi, New Zealand spinach, tutae-ikamoana

Current Threat Status (2012):

At Risk - Naturally Uncommon

Distribution:

Indigenous. Kermadec, Three Kings, North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands. Also present in Australia, the western Pacific, Malesia, Japan and southern South America.

Habitat:

A species of the coastal strand zone often growing along beaches amongst driftwood, and sea weed but also in sand dunes, on boulder and cobble beaches, on cliff faces and rock ledges and in some areas such as the Kermadec Islands an conspicuous and important associated of the vegetation of many of the outer islands in the archipelago. Partly because it has been cultivated as a vegetable this species often appears in landfills or as a casual weed of urban areas. Indeed some wild occurrences near urban coastal settlements may stem from discarded plants or seed in garden waste.

Features:

Widely trailing perennial herb forming dense patches, circular mats, or rarely mounds of interlacing branches up to 1 m thick. Branches up to 1 m long, bright to dark green or yellow green, subterete, numerous, woody near base, decumbent, trailing not or only rarely rooting at nodes. Petioles firmly fleshy up to 20 mm long. Leaves 15-80 x 10-60 mm, dark green to yellow green, darker above and paler beneath, ovate-rhomboid, rhomboid to triangular, obtuse to subacute, entire or rarely slightly sinuate or shallowly lobed, both surfaces very densely though finely papillose. Flowers solitary or paired, mostly perfect sometimes unisexual, sessile, 7-8 mm diameter, perianth dark yellow to pale yellow (rarely yellow-green). Calyx-tube broadly turbinate, lobes broad-triangular, obtuse. Stamens variable but between 10-20. Ovary 3-8-celled, styles 3-8. Fruit 8-10(15) mm long, subturbinate, angled, woody horns 2-4 apical, sharp to blunted-ended, seeds 4-10.

Flowering:

October-February

Fruiting:

November - March

Threats:

It is threatened by disturbance of coastal sands and stony beaches.

References and further reading:

Wilcox, M.D. New Zealand spinach in Mangere. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal*, 56: 82

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=325



Caption: Te Whakaru, Chatham Island

Photographer: John Sawyer



Caption: Tutukaka, *Tetragonia tetragonoides*

Photographer: Lisa Forester