



Atriplex cinerea

Common Name(s):

Grey saltbush

Current Threat Status (2012):

Threatened - Nationally Critical

Distribution:

Indigenous. New Zealand: South Island (Collected from Boulder Bank in Nelson in 1960 and DURville Island in 1961, still present in the Waimea Estuary). Historically it occurred at Palliser Bay and Wellington. Also known from Australia, including Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands.

Habitat:

Coastal. On boulder beaches, within salt marshes, on barrier bar sand spits and shell banks.

Features*:

Sprawling, semi-erect, woody, heavily branched, leafy, dioecious or subdioecious shrub, forming mounds up to 1.5 × 4 m. Branchlets stout, rooting freely on contact with soil; stems at first ridged and angular, soon becoming terete and woody with age. All parts of young growth covered in a fine, scurfy, farinose pubescence; coalescing with age to form silvery white scurfy scales. Leaves 15–20 × 32–46 mm, linear-oblong, lanceolate, rarely weakly hastate, silvery grey, greyish white or occasionally pinkish grey, under surface with pale white, thickened midrib. Petioles short, 1–3 mm, stout, silvery white. Leaf surface ± mat, glabrous, cuticle soon cracking in an anastomosing pattern made up of ± circular scales; apex white slightly thickened, apiculate, apiculus pink, deciduous, 0.5–0.8 mm; base acute, attenuate, rounded or very rarely truncate; margin entire, lightly curved, occasionally sparsely glandular hairy near leaf base. Female flowers borne in leaf axils, either solitary, or in small axillary clusters, rarely forming axillary and terminal spikes. Female flowers occasionally found within the lower leaf axils of male plants. Perianth absent; bracteoles 2, 2 mm diameter, lower half fused, margins initially entire, either remaining so or developing appendages in fruit; stigmas 2, c.3 mm long, pink, filiform, slightly tapering, minutely plumose-papillate, ovary 0.35 mm, ovoid. Male inflorescence 30–140 mm long, conspicuous, dense, forming large interrupted or continuous oblong or obovoid spikes, these often paniced toward branch apices; glomerules 5–30 mm long, purple-green, pinkish red or wine-red. Flowers unisexual; perianth lobes 5, pink or wine-red, 1.7 mm long, obovate, apex sharply inflexed, cucullate, exterior towards apex with dense vesicular covering; stamens 5–6, filaments 0.8 mm long, white, anthers 0.8 mm long, broad-oblongate, pollen yellowish golden. Fruiting bracteoles subsessile or shortly stipitate; stipe turbinate, woody; bracteoles ovoid to broadly deltoid or rhomboid, 6–10 mm long and wide, united towards base, corky or ± woody and swollen toward the centre and base, otherwise coriaceous with an entire margin; surface smooth or ornamented with verrucose appendages on one or both sides. Seed circular 3–4 mm diameter, testa chestnut-brown, smooth and glossy; radicle lateral, erect.

Flowering:

August - June

Fruiting:

September - August

Threats:

Now known from just one natural population. It has also been successfully established in a number of sites around Nelson. Vulnerable to browsing animals and coastal erosion.

*Attribution:

Description modified from de Lange, et al. (2000).

References and further reading:

de Lange, P.J.; Murray, B.G.; Gardner, R.O. 1998: *Atriplex cinerea* (Chenopodiaceae) in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 36: 521–529.

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* 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285–309

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=724



Caption: Noman's Island, Waimea Inlet

Photographer: Peter de Lange



Caption: *Atriplex cinerea* at No Mans Island, Waimea Inlet

Photographer: Peter de Lange