

# 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

Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

## NVS CODE

IPOCAI

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 30

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, SO

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

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.



Flower, Matai Bay (November). Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



*Ipomoea cairica* plant and flowers, Auckland Zoo., Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Date taken: 26/12/2005, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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 funneliform, 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 it 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

Green, P.S. 1994: Flora of Australia Volume 49, Oceanic Islands 1. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service

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

## NZPCN FACT SHEET 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

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ipomoea-cairica/>