

# *Commelina diffusa* Burm.f.

## Family:

Commelinaceae

Burman, N.L. (1768) *Fl. Ind.* : 18, t.7, f.2.

## Common name:

Scurvy Weed

## Stem

Spawning fleshy herb with ascending branches up to 75 cm tall, rooting at the nodes.

## Leaves

Leaf blades about 20-35 x 7-9 mm. Leaf surface can be either glabrous (i.e. hairless) or hispid (i.e. bristly), sessile and hispid.

## Flowers

Inflorescence enclosing bracts green. Inner perianth segments pale to bright blue Lower cincinnus with 2-4 flowers, upper cincinnus with 1- several flowers. Upper cincinnus bears only male flowers and has a longer peduncle, while the lower cincinnus bears bisexual flowers on a shorter peduncle. The pedicels are thick and curved and 3-5 mm. The membranous sepals are inconspicuous, 3-4 mm long. The upper two petals are 4.2-6 mm. The anther connective (i.e. the tissue connecting the two halves of the anther) of the centre-most stamen has a broad transverse band of violet. The spathes solitary, borne on a peduncle and typically falcate with a cordate to rounded base, acuminate apices and can be either glabrous or hispidulous beneath, 0.8-2.5 cm long, but may be as short as 0.5 cm and as long as 4 cm. Peduncles 0.5-2 cm long.

## Fruit

The fruit has three locules and 2 valves, 4-6.3 x 3-4 mm and contain five seeds. Seeds brown, 2-2.8(-3.2) x 1.4-1.8 mm, testa deeply reticulate.

## Seedlings

Features not available.

## Distribution and Ecology

Occurs in NT, CYP, NEQ, CEQ and southwards to southern New South Wales. Altitudinal range from sea level to 1090 m. Occurs in a wide range of vegetation types from rainforest to wooded grassland. Also occurs in tropical Asia eastwards to Polynesia, including Hawaii.

## Natural History & Notes

Juice being used to cure wounds, for inflamed eyes, as part of an external remedy for bone fracture and as a digestive aid (Smith 1979).

Women rub their hair with it in the Torres Strait area (Lawrie s.n.)

Within China it is used as a medicinal herb with febrifugal and diuretic properties. A dye is also obtained from the juice of the petals for use in painting.

## RFK Code

4038



Flowers. © G. Sankowsky



Habit, leaves and flower. © G. Sankowsky



Herbarium specimen. © CSIRO

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