

Commelina diffusa Burm.f.

Family:

Commelinaceae

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

Common name:

Scurvy Weed

Stem

Spreading 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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