

CONVOLVULACEAE

TWO EXOTIC TAXA OF *IPOMOEA* AND *MERREMIA* IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Recently two exotic taxa of the Convolvulaceae occurring in southern Africa, attracted some attention.

***Ipomoea carnea* Jacq. subsp. *fistulosa* (Mart. ex Choisy) D.Austin**

I. fistulosa Mart. ex Choisy

I. crassicaulis (Benth.) Robinson

This pantropical weed has been recorded as poisonous to goats in India, the Sudan, Tanzania and now also in Mozambique (Prof. em. T.W. Naudé pers. comm.). *I. carnea* belongs to the section *Eriospermum* Hallier f. of *Ipomoea* L. together with *I. arborescens* G.Don which is often cultivated in southern Africa.

Description: erect to scrambling shrubs to 3 m high; stems woody at base, herbaceous at tips, hollow, glabrous or minutely pubescent. *Leaves* alternate, entire, ovate to lanceolate, 100–250 mm long, truncate to shallowly cordate at base, long acuminate apically, pubescent on both sides but sometimes glabrescent; petioles 20–100 mm long. *Flowers* in cymose-paniculate clusters at branch tips, 1- to several-flowered; sepals 5, suborbicular, 5–6 mm long, somewhat unequal, subcoriaceous, glabrous or pubescent, persistent; corollas funnel-shaped, 5-lobed, deep pink to rose-purple, throat darker than limb, 50–90 mm long, finely tomentose outside, midpetaline areas well defined; stamens 5. *Fruit* a capsule, ovoid to subglobose, 20 × 10–15 mm, glabrous. *Seeds* usually 4, covered with long comose brown trichomes.

The subsp. *fistulosa* is distinguished by lanceolate to ovate leaves whereas the subsp. *carnea* has cordate to rounded leaves.

Distribution: *I. carnea*, with two subspecies, is of tropical American origin. The subsp. *carnea* seems to be confined to its natural distribution area from Peru to Mexico. The subsp. *fistulosa*, however, with a natural distribution area from Argentina to Florida and Texas, has been introduced to the tropics of the Old World and Hawaii, where it has often escaped from cultivation. In southern Africa it is found in Mozambique, the Northern Province, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and probably also in Swaziland. PRE has specimens from 2530BD, 2732CA, 2732CC, 2830CA, 2832AD, 2930DB, 3030AD [expressed in terms of the Degree Reference System (Edwards & Leistner 1971)].

Ecology: *I. carnea* flowers throughout the year. The subsp. *carnea* prefers dry habitats whereas the subsp. *fistulosa* prefers wet habitats. In southern Africa *I. carnea* subsp. *fistulosa* is suberect and grows in open, sunny sites, often climbing in shaded areas. It is cultivated as an ornamental as well as in hedges and windbreaks and often occurs as culture relic and escape from cultivation. It will then occur in disturbed areas such as along roadsides, but also in grassland, along river banks and in other moist areas. *C.J. Ward 12368* (PRE, UDW), collected

below the Inanda Dam wall in KwaZulu-Natal in August 1993, appears to have become naturalized.

***Merremia dissecta* (Jacq.) Hallier f.**

Ross: 295 (1972) listed this species for Natal (KwaZulu-Natal) with the voucher *Schweickerdt 1361* (NH) from an unknown locality. In this way the name *M. dissecta* became connected with the indigenous southern African flora. It was listed as 'Endemic' and 'Rare' for KwaZulu-Natal, and with its global conservation status also 'Rare', by C.Hilton-Taylor in *Red Data List of southern African plants*: 74 (1996).

The label of the cited specimen, *Schweickerdt 1361*, however, states that it was cultivated in the Durban Botanical Garden, flowering in May 1939. Another specimen in NH and PRE, *C.N. Buthelezi 636*, was flowering and fruiting in January 1986, and was growing in the Natal Herbarium Garden, which adjoins the Durban Botanical Garden. It seems that there are no further records in NH or in PRE of this taxon, either cultivated or as garden escapes.

Description: *M. dissecta* is a perennial twiner, coarsely hirsute at first, becoming almost glabrous (petioles, peduncles and young stems with long patent yellowish hairs ± 4 mm long). *Leaves* deeply palmately 5–7-fid, lobes lanceolate, up to 100 mm long, coarsely sinuately dentate, middle lobe larger than lateral ones. *Corolla* white, up to 35 mm long, with purple or dull reddish throat. *Capsule* globose, ± 15 mm across, surrounded by enlarged brownish sepals.

Distribution and ecology: native to the southern United States of America and south to Argentina. Occasionally it escapes from cultivation in tropical regions, Bailey & Bailey: 729 (1977).

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