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Tradescantia zebrina Bosse

[AU1]

SPIDERWORT FAMILY

Commelinaceae

COMMON NAMES

English: inch plant, striped wandering Jew, wandering Jew

DESCRIPTION

Succulent evergreen herbaceous plant with spreading stems, hairless and purple-red, producing roots at the joints.

Leaves: Green, silver and purple longitudinal stripes on upper surface, with purple undersides, hairless; egg-shaped or broadly sword-shaped (3–7cm long and 1.5–3cm wide); margins entire, narrowing to a pointed tip; leaf-sheath (clasping tubular structure) (0.8–1.2 cm long) surrounds or encloses part of stem.

Flowers: Bright pink or purple, in small clusters at the tips of the stems.

Fruits: Capsules (dry fruits that open at maturity), small, seeds brown.

ORIGIN

Mexico.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornament.

INVADES

Savannahs, roadsides, forest edges and coastal scrub.

IMPACTS

Has the ability to form dense monospecific stands, displacing native plants and animals. It tends to grow in disturbed secondary forest and in moist semi-open areas. It also readily establishes in “waste areas, disturbed sites, roadsides, urban bushland, riparian vegetation, open woodlands and forests in sub-tropical and warmer temperate regions” (Environmental Weeds of Australia, 2016). It has become invasive in a World Heritage Site on Saint Lucia on the middle slopes of Gros Piton, where its dense carpets are displacing indigenous plant species such as *Peperomia trifolia* (L.) A. Dietr. (Piperaceae); *P. myrtifolia* (Vahl) A. Dietr.; *Callisia repens* (Jacq.) L. (Commelinaceae), and *Gibasis geniculata* (Jacq.) Rohweder (Commelinaceae) (Graveson, 2012). In a regenerating Atlantic Forest fragment, *T. zebrina* proved to be a strong competitor, influencing species richness and abundance (Mantoani *et al.*, 2013). In Australia, “it has formed dense infestations (up to 1 m thick) along the edges of rainforests, particularly near settlements” (Humphries and Stanton, 1992, in Csurhes and Edwards, 1998). Contact with the foliage can cause irritations of the skin (Floridata, 2012; Dave’s Garden, 2013). Recorded as invasive on many Pacific Islands and in Australia, China, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Canary Islands, Brazil and Portugal (PIER, 2009; CABI, 2016).

NOTES

Present on a number of islands in the Caribbean (CABI, 2021). Invasive in Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, and St Lucia (Rojas-Sandoval *et al.*, 2017). Found to be invasive in Barbados, Grenada, and St Kitts and Nevis (A. Witt, *pers. obs.*).



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