

Mercurialis canariensis new for El Hierro Island (Canary Islands)

Mercurialis canariensis Obbard & S. A. Harris is an endemic plant recently described from the Canary Islands (OBBARD *et al.*, 2006b: 103).

This taxon went undetected until recently, having been included within the variability of the *Mercurialis annua sensu lato* complex (HANSEN & SUNDING, 1993:170; STIERSTORFER & GAISBERG, 2006).

The authors who had previously dealt with the flora of the island El Hierro had only indicated *M. annua*, a polymorphic taxon which presents different ploidy levels, a fact which made it difficult to recognise the newly-proposed taxon, and justifies its lack of recognition up to the present day.

Apparently, both *M. annua* and *M. canariensis* are found in the Canary Islands. Before carrying out our work, no specimens from El Hierro were investigated or located in Herbaria.

The distribution of *M. canariensis* on the islands of the Macaronesian Archipelagos is unclear (OBBARD *et al.*, 2006a) and neither is it very clear within the Canary Archipelago.

A proof of the partial knowledge of this taxon's chorology is that it has been detected in different localities on the north side of El Hierro Island, localities which are indicated in the accompanying map (Fig. 1).

El Hierro Island localities: Betenama, above the village, 781 m; UTM: 28R 211 080, BC; Árbol de Garoé, 1100 m; UTM: 28 R 210 080, BC; Mocanal, 530 m, UTM: 28R 210 077, BC.

On El Hierro it is limited to the moister half of the island. It is found in horticultural and ruderal environments. It has been recorded from sea level, in the more humid zones in the N of the Island, to 1100 m above sea level. It is found growing in ruderal habitats, which should be referred to the

Chenopodio-Malvetum and *Artemisio-Rumicion* associations, see GAISBERG (2005) and STIERSTORFER (2005).

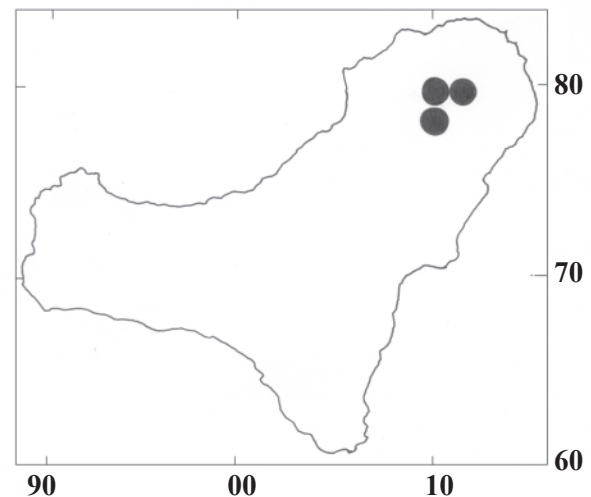


Figure 1. Distribution of *Mercurialis canariensis* in El Hierro Island.

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