

**\**Tetragonia decumbens***

DUNE SPINACH, SEA SPINACH

Mill.

**Flowering period:** All year depending on extent and duration of rainfall.

**Description:** Decumbent to erect scrambling and climbing fleshy species often forming rounded mounds as frontal dunes (see image), 1–3 m wide, 0.2–1 m high and commonly found in sand accreting areas. Leaves fleshy, variable size and shape from ovate to linear ovate, 1–2 cm wide, 2–4 cm long with a rugose surface of expanded epidermal cells and rolled margins. Flowers axillary, sweetly scented, produced continuously as the plant grows, petals slightly reflexed, yellow and relatively inconspicuous. Fruits four-winged, brown at maturity, 1.5–2 cm long, potentially wind dispersed and can survive long periods of immersion in seawater (a possible dispersal mechanism enabling the species to reach off-shore islands). Seed is long-lived if buried in dune sand.

**Pollination:** Open pollinated by a wide variety of insects.

**Distribution:** Found from Kalbarri to Busselton, Albany to Bremer Bay in coastal sands and limestone from frontal dunes to open areas in secondary dunes where the species often dominates the foredunes and exposed secondary dunes. Native to coastal areas of the Cape region of South Africa.

**Control methods:** By application of glyphosate or manual removal. The species is highly invasive and can re-germinate from the dormant soil seed bank. Repeat visits to control sites is necessary to hand remove any new germinates.

**Notes:** The species is thought to have been accidentally introduced to the west coast in sand ballast dumped overboard when sailing ships moored at Fremantle and Albany. One of the most aggressive weeds in mobile dune environments which, without control, will overtop native species and exclude natural recolonisation events. The plant is used as a food source for supporting large populations of ravens and parrots that are not native to the dune communities in the Perth region. Easily distinguished from the native *Tetragonia* which has smaller, more linear and less fleshy leaves and a climbing rather than spreading habit.



Habit



Fruit



Leaves



Fruit



Flowers



Distribution