

The Flowering of *Ipomoea pes-caprae* subsp. *brasiliensis*

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Ipomoea pes-caprae subsp. *brasiliensis* (L.) Ooststr.

I was prompted to reply to Maureen Young's question as to whether *Ipomoea pes-caprae* subsp. *brasiliensis* has ever been seen in flower on mainland New Zealand (*Auck. Bot. Soc. Jl* 53(1): 9-10 1998), when I also read Ewen Cameron's reply to the same "that possibly only once" according to a voucher specimen lodged at the Auckland Museum herbarium (AK 118972). This specimen was collected by R.C.Cooper on Ninety - Mile Beach on the 17th January 1967.

Graeme Hambly and myself were members of Maureen Young's November 1997 field trip to Te Paengarehia (Twilight Beach) when the group found the small population of the *Ipomoea pes caprae* subsp. *brasiliensis* between a flat-topped shell midden and the coastal dunes. The seepage of water from the elevated midden provided the ideal conditions for the diminutive *Ranunculus acaulis* which was growing on the summit.

We were determined to revisit this site hopefully to coincide with the flowering of this tropical strand beach morning glory. Hence on a damp Sunday morning with soft drizzle in the air, Graeme and myself set off for Te Paengarehia in search for the flowering morning glory. The date was 12th April 1998. On arrival at the site we were truly amazed at the vigorous growth rate in those 5 months of summer warmth. The dunes had become covered in a tangle of thick vine stems, roots sprouting from the nodes and stems stretching out 3 metres and beyond. The vines were flowering prolifically and had been for several months as there were many mature seed capsules as well as immature ones present.

Even without the flower this Pacific subspecies is an extremely handsome plant with glabrous leaf blades that were a dark lustrous green, c. 10 cm long, lighter coloured veining, attractive red margins and a distinctly emarginate (notched) apex. The reticulate veining was particularly noticeable and appealing.



Fig. 1: *Ipomoea pes-caprae* 12 April 1998

The globose seed capsules measured 1.5 cm in diameter. Two fruits (each containing 3-4 seeds) were collected for the Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens.

The seed was sown on the 24th April 1998, germinated on the 19th May 1998 and now the real challenge remains as to whether we can successfully flower this strand plant in cultivation.