

# ADDITIONS TO THE MALTESE FLORA

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## ABSTRACT:

*Ipomoea cairica* (L.) Sweet; *Conyza floribunda* Kunth and *Secale cereale* L. are recorded as new to the Maltese flora. The first definite record of *Potamogeton pectinatus* L. is also given here, previous records being ascribed to errors in identification.

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A number of plants not previously known to exist in the Maltese Islands are dealt with here. Specimens of all species are deposited in the author's herbarium. IPOMOEA CAIRICA (L.) Sweet, *Hort Brit.* ed. 1: 287 (1827).

Syn. *I. palmata* Forsk.

Family: Convolvulaceae

A large colony of this creeper/climber occurs on the clay slopes at Daħlet Fekruna (Xemxija) in NW Malta. It has probably escaped from cultivation from the nearby Xemxija estate. My attention was first drawn to its existence in 1973 by G.L. Bate, then residing in Malta. I have visited the place several times since then and the colony is flourishing.

Accompanying species include *Tropaeolum majus* L. (another widespread adventive), *Hedysarum coronarium* L., *Cynara cardunculus* L., *Oxalis pes-caprae* L., *Hordeum marinum* Huds. and *Phalaris paradoxa* L. Another adventive *Ipomoea*, *I. purpurea* Roth, also used to occur in the same place when *I. cairica* was first found, but it does not seem to have persisted.

*Ipomoea cairica* is frequently cultivated as an ornamental under the name of "I. digitata" which refers to *I. paniculata* (L.) R. Br., a different species with less deeply lobed leaves and larger flowers. *I. cairica* is a native of the Old World tropics, becoming naturalized in regions with a suitable climate. (5593) FIGS. 1,5.



Fig. 1: *Ipomoea cairica* from Dahlet Fekruna (photo: E. Lanfranco)

CONYZA FLORIBUNDA Kunth in Humb., Bonpl. & Kunth, *Nov. Gen. Sp.*  
4:73 (1820).  
Syn. *C. naudinii* Bonnet  
Family: Compositae

First found by the author in August 1976 where it was growing as a weed in the University grounds at Tal-Qroqq (Msida). Accompanied by *Conyza bonariensis* (L.) Cronq., *Convolvulus arvensis* L., *Parietaria diffusa* Mert. & Koch, *Dittrichia viscosa* (L.) W. Greuter and other weeds. In Aug. 1977 Michael Briffa came across another colony growing on waste ground at Floriana. In 1978 it has been recorded from Pieta and Marsa.

*Conyza floribunda* is very closely related to *C. bonariensis* from which it differs by being larger and more robust — often exceeding 200cm in height; by having a larger, usually denser inflorescence; by being greener (*C. bonariensis* being markedly greyish) and by having much wider lower leaves. According to Cronquist (1976), *Conyza floribunda* should be regarded as a variant of *C. bonariensis* since study of native populations of the two taxa does not lend support to their separation. *C. floribunda* is a native of South America. (5491) FIG. 2.

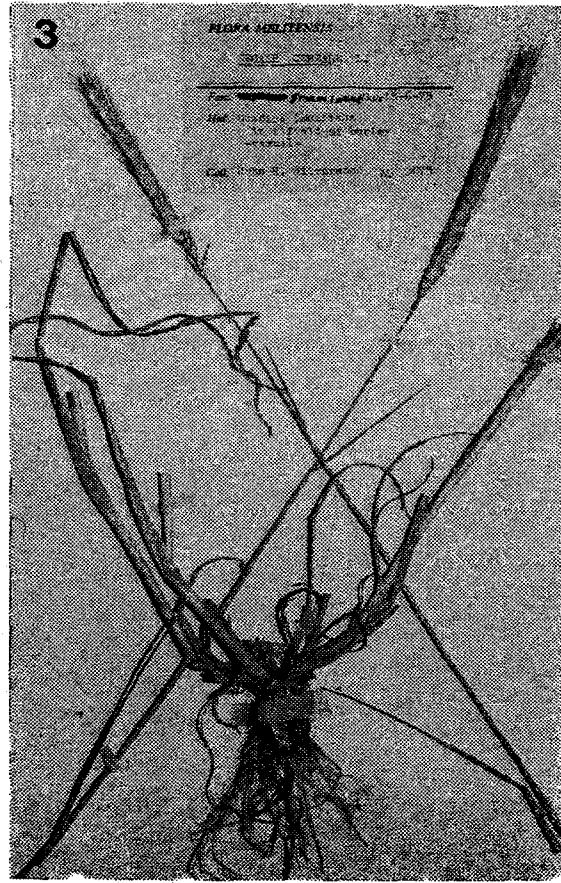


Fig. 2, *Conyza floribunda* (5491); Fig. 3, *Secale cereale* (5075);

POTAMOGETON PECTINATUS L., *Sp. Pl.* ed.1: 127 (1753)

Family: Potamogetonaceae

This species (together with two other Potamogetons) was recorded by Gavino Gulia (1873) as occurring in ditches at San Pawl tat-Targa. Sommier and Caruana Gatto (1915) and J. Borg (1927) cite Gulia's record, commenting that no *Potamogeton* has ever been found by others. The latter ascribes the *Potamogeton* records to error. Haslam *et al* (1977) ascribe the records to Gulia and Borg without further comment. It is probable that as far as *P. pectinatus* is concerned, the records are ascribable to *Zannichellia palustris* L. which is common at San Pawl tat-Targa whereas there is no suitable habitat for any *Potamogeton* in that locality.

This year (May 1977) a large population of *Potamogeton pectinatus* in flower was found at Ghajn il-Kbira (Girgenti) in a large reservoir by Michael Briffa and myself. Accompanying submerged aquatics were *Myriophyllum verticillatum* L. and an unidentified *Cladophora*. The reservoir is formed by damming

part of the valley to retain the spring water. Unlike most other bodies of water in the Maltese Islands, it does not dry up in summer. According to farmers in the area, there used to be a small permanent pond before the dam was built.

Although here *P. pectinatus* was growing in a purely freshwater habitat; this species is known to grow also in brackish and fully saline waters with species of *Ruppia* and *Zostera*. Sterile plants are very similar to species of *Ruppia* but these have finely denticulate leaf-tips while *P. pectinatus* has smooth leaf-tips. (5635) FIG. 4.

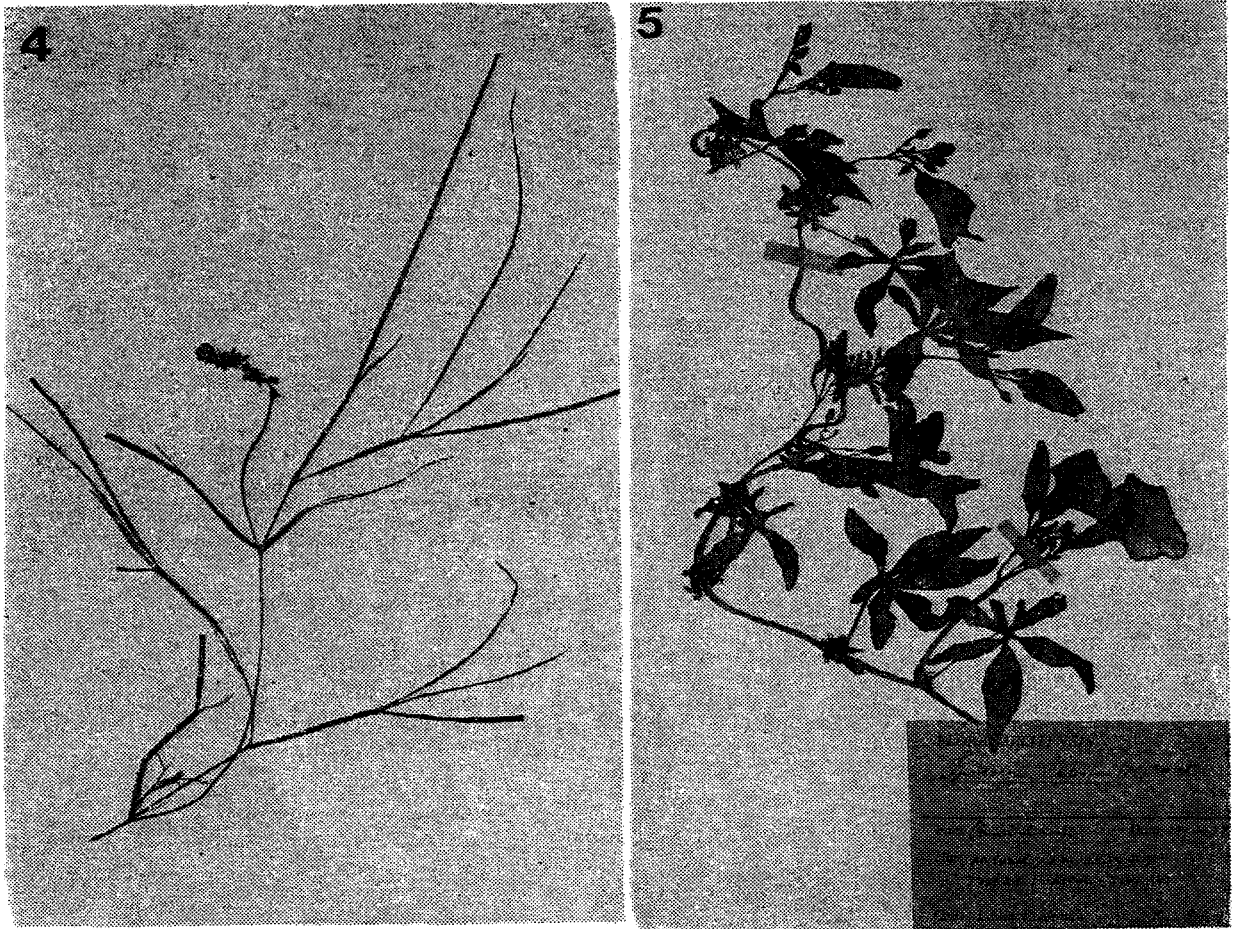


Fig. 4. *Potamogeton pectinatus* (5635); Fig. 5, *Ipomoea cairica* (5593).  
(Paotos E. Lanfranco).

SECALE CEREALE L., *Sp. Pl.* ed.1: 87 (1753).

Family: Gramineae

Found in a field of barley at Ghadira (Mellieħa) by J. H. Silverwood in June 1975. Its seed was evidently imported by accident with that of barley. This is the rye of cultivation. There is no record of this cereal ever being cultivated in Malta. In 1976 some variants were cultivated at the Argotti Botanic Gardens. (5075) FIG. 3.

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