

Flora of the Darwin Region

VOLUME 1

P.S. Short & I.D. Cowie (eds)



SURIANACEAE

P.S. Short

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Territory**

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Other Authors/Contributors: Short, P.S.,
Cowie, I.D., Northern Territory Department
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Editors: P.S. Short and I.D. Cowie
Illustrations: M. Osterkamp
Typesetting: D. Bisa and M. Voukalis
Photographic Editor: B.M. Stuckey
Authors contributing to this publication:
D.E. Albrecht
Northern Territory Herbarium, Department of
Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and
Sport, P.O. Box 1120, Alice Springs, N.T. 0871,
Australia
R.M. Barker
State Herbarium of South Australia, Plant
Biodiversity Centre, P.O. Box 2732, Kent Town,
S.A. 5071, Australia
I.D. Cowie; B. Crase*; D.J. Dixon*; C.R. Dunlop*;
R.K. Harwood*; R.A. Kerrigan*; G.J. Leach*;
C. Mangion*; P.S. Short; G.M. Wightman*
Northern Territory Herbarium, Department of
Natural Resources, Environment the Arts and

Sport, P.O. Box 496, Palmerston, N.T. 0831,
Australia
L.A. Craven
Australian National Herbarium, Centre for
Plant, Biodiversity Research, G.P.O. Box 1600,
Canberra, A.C.T. 2601, Australia
L.L. Forman† (deceased)
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond,
Surrey, TW9 3AB, UK
B. Jackes
James Cook University Herbarium, School of
Marine and Tropical Biology, James Cook
University, Townsville, Qld 4811, Australia
L. Jessup
Queensland Herbarium Mt Coot-tha Road,
Toowong, Qld 4066, Australia
J. Palmer
Australian National Herbarium, G.P.O. Box
1600, Canberra, A.C.T. 2601, Australia

*Former employee NT Herbarium

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SURIANACEAE

P.S. Short

Shrubs or trees, tanniferous. *Leaves* simple, alternate; stipules small and deciduous or absent. *Flowers* bisexual or unisexual, 5-merous, solitary in the axils or in axillary and terminal inflorescences. *Calyx* of 5 distinct, or nearly distinct, imbricate sepals. *Petals* 5, free, imbricate or absent (in *Stylobasium*). *Stamens* in 2 whorls but sometimes those of the inner whorl reduced and staminodal or absent; anthers tetrasporangiate and dithecal, dehiscing by longitudinal slits. *Gynoecium* of 1–5 superior carpels, each carpel with a basally-attached style. *Fruit* indehiscent, a drupe or of dry, nut-like carpels. *Seeds* with little or no endosperm.

Cronquist (1981) recognised four genera and six species, Thomas (2004) five genera and nine species, and Schneider (2007) five genera and eight species. The genus *Suriana* is pantropical, *Recchia* is from Mexico, while *Cadellia*, *Guilfoylia* and *Stylobasium* are endemic to Australia. Two species occur in the N.T., with *Stylobasium spathulatum* from the arid southern region and *Suriana maritima* in the north.

Taxonomic references: Nooteboom (1962); Cronquist (1981); Telford (1993); Beentje (1998); Thomas (2004); Schneider (2007).

SURIANA L.

Shrubs or small trees. *Leaves* sessile, entire, crowded at end of branchlets; stipules absent. *Flowers* bisexual, solitary or more commonly in axillary inflorescences, the inflorescences with persistent, leafy bracts. *Sepals* 5, connate at base. *Petals* 5, shortly clawed. *Stamens* 10 in 2 whorls or sometimes the antipetalous ones reduced and staminodal. *Carpels* 5, free; stigmas small, capitate; ovules 2 per carpel. *Fruit* of 3–5 nut-like carpels enclosed by the common calyx.

Monotypic.

S. maritima L.

Spreading *shrub* to *c.* 2 m tall, young growth with a dense indumentum of simple, glandular and eglandular hairs; leaf scars prominent on old growth. *Leaves* oblanceolate to linear-oblanceolate, 11–36 mm long, 1.8–5 mm wide, dull green, venation obscure, hairy, held upright and crowded at end of branchlets. *Flowers* solitary or several together and each subtended by a pair of leafy, lanceolate bracts *c.* 2–5 mm long. *Pedicels* 4–8 mm long. *Sepals* ovate to lanceolate, 6.8–9.5 mm long, 2.5–3.3 mm wide, glandular-pubescent. *Petals* obovate, *c.* 4–6 mm long, *c.* 3 mm wide, glabrous, yellow, each with a short claw and prominent veins. *Staminal filaments* with white, spreading hairs in their lower half; anthers *c.* 0.6 mm long. *Ovary* hairy. *Styles* glabrous. *Fruiting carpels* 3–5 per flower, 3–3.5 mm long, 2.4–3.2 mm wide, somewhat triangular in cross section with the inner surfaces straight and the outer rounded,

pubescent, dark brown. *Flowering*: Feb.–Sept. *Fruiting*: Apr.–Oct.

Fig. 1 (Brennan 2896; Byrnes 1004); Pl. 1 (Cowie 10376).

With the exception of the west coast of Africa, this species is widely distributed along the world's tropical and subtropical coastlines (Australia: N.T., Qld). Its nut-like carpels are known to remain buoyant in sea water for up to five months, a fact presumably accounting for its wide distribution. In the N.T. it is only known from, and east of, Cobourg Peninsula and almost invariably grows in calcareous sand above the high tide mark (*e.g.* with *Casuarina equisetifolia*) but it has also been collected from low, limestone cliffs.

Although *S. maritima* has not been collected in the D.R. its occurrence on the north-western beaches of the Cobourg Peninsula suggests that it occurs on neighbouring Melville Island, if not other beaches in the region.

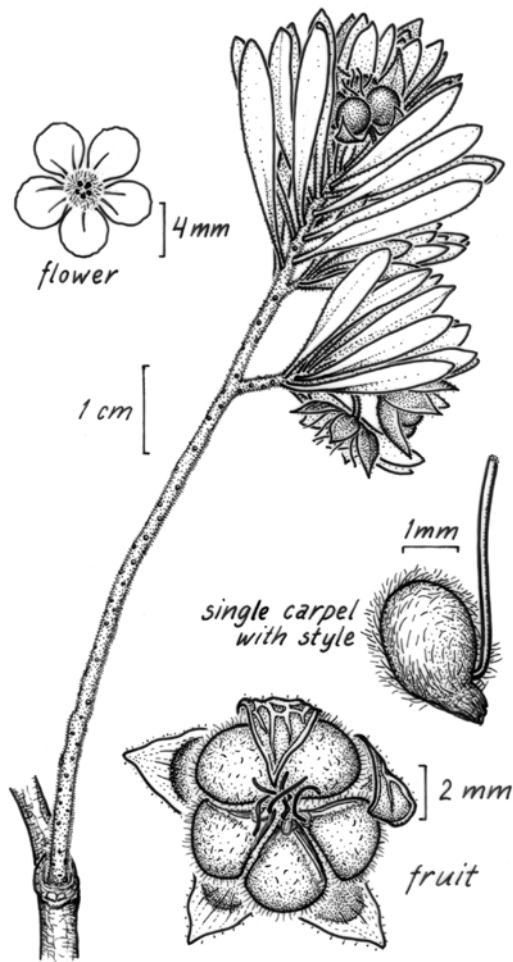
Suriana maritimaPl. 1 *Suriana maritima* (Photos: I.D. Cowie)

Fig. 1

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