



# Canary Island Tamarisk

## Taxonomy

Order: Caryophyllales

Family: Tamaricaceae

Species: *Tamarix canariensis* Willd.

## Summary

A semi-deciduous, loosely branched shrub or small tree, endemic to the Canary Islands. It has been introduced to the Americas where it has naturalized, especially in deserts and semi-arid areas with high soil salinity, and become a highly invasive environmental weed, forming dense monocultures, altering habitats and threatening native biodiversity.



*Tamarix canariensis* © Krzysztof Ziarnek

## Biology

*Tamarix canariensis* has an extremely high reproduction rate, the ability to produce seeds over a very long period, efficient means of seed dispersal, the ability to reproduce vegetatively as well as by seed, and mechanisms for rapid seed germination and seedling establishment, allowing it to outcompete native plants. It grows in a variety of soil types (including sand, loam and clay) and can tolerate some salinity. It requires moist soils for 2-4 weeks after germination and produces a long tap root to access groundwater. It needs full sun and grows well in open areas.

## Distribution in Caribbean

It is widespread in the Caribbean and has been found in parts of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

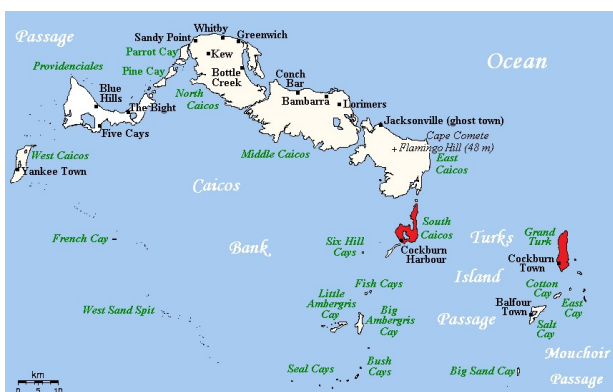
## Pathway of Entry

Natural dispersal: disperse naturally and very efficiently by means of the huge quantity of small windblown or waterborne seeds.

Intentional introduction: sale of ornamental plants by nurserymen. Seeds dispersed on farming machinery.

## Impact

*Tamarix canariensis* is typically found in conjunction with other *Tamarix* species and resultant hybrids, which can replace native plants, drastically alter habitats and food webs for animals, deplete water sources, increase erosion, flood damage, soil salinity, and fire potential. *Tamarix canariensis* has the potential to be a serious environmental weed that threatens native biodiversity.



## Further Information:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamarix\\_canariensis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamarix_canariensis)

<https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/52486>

<http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/species.php?sc=72>

[this datasheet refers to *T. ramosissima* but the information is pertinent to *T. canariensis*]



*Tamarix canariensis* flowers © Krzysztof Ziarnek



*Tamarix canariensis* foliage © Jessica Spencer



Reddish new stems are characteristic for *Tamarix canariensis*  
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*Tamarix canariensis* © Jessica Spencer,  
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### Field Description

*Tamarix canariensis* is a shrub or shrubby tree, 1-5 m high, with reddish-brown bark, entirely glabrous. Leaves are sessile with narrow bases, 1.5-3.5 mm long. Summer inflorescences densely composed of racemes (flower spike), the spring ones usually simple, loose and not as common as the summer ones. Racemes 1.5-7 cm long, 3-4 mm broad. Bracts longer than pedicels, trowel-shaped, wider below the middle, acuminate (tapering to a point), with margins more or less denticulate (finely toothed), mainly in their lower part. Pedicels shorter than calyx. Calyx pentamerous (five parts). Sepals narrowly trullate (ovate but angled), acute, or the outer two ovate to narrowly trullate-ovate and the inner trullate-ovate and broader than the outer, irregularly denticulate to erose (irregularly notched), 0.5-1 mm long, not connate at base. Corolla pentamerous, persistent.

Petals, dark to pale pink, 1-1.75 mm long, obovate to broadly elliptic-obovate. Flowering occurs from May to October.

### Similar Species

*Tamarix canariensis* is one of a group of closely related invasive species in North America, which also includes *T. ramosissima*, *T. chinensis* and *T. gallica*. *Tamarix canariensis* differs from *T. ramosissima* and *T. chinensis* by the insertion of filaments on the lobes of the nectary disc rather than between them; and from *T. gallica* in bract length (at least as long as the calyx in *T. gallica*, only half as long in *T. canariensis*) and in sepals (entire in *T. gallica*, distinctly denticulate in *T. canariensis*). However, hybrids occur between *T. canariensis* and all three other species and morphological identification can be difficult.