

Project partner: Mediterranean Plant Conservation Unit, Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania

Island

CRETE

Species name (Family)

Datisca cannabina L. (Datiscaceae)

Common name

English name: akalbir

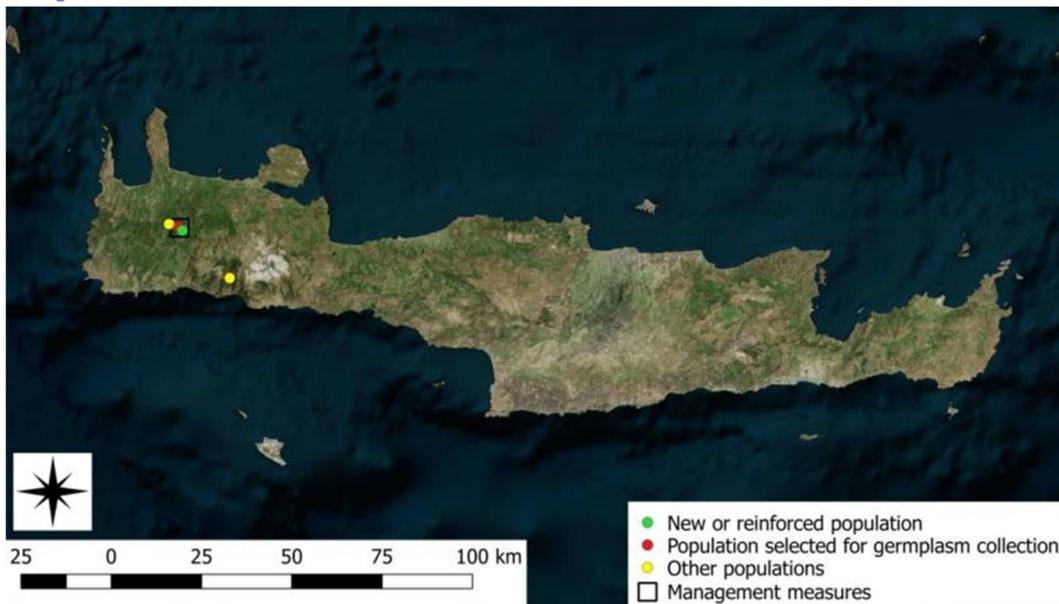
Plant description

- Erect, dioecious, glabrous perennial herb 1–2.5 m tall. Leaves alternate, imparipinnate, with 2–4 pairs of lanceolate, sharply serrate leaflets (somewhat resembling *Cannabis*, hence the name).
- Life form: Hemicryptophyte; flowering: May-August; fruiting: October-November; dispersal strategy: water might play an important role for the dispersal of this taxon.
- In Crete, *Datisca cannabina* grows on moist stream banks in woodlands largely composed of *Cupressus sempervirens* with *Platanus orientalis* along the watercourses, at an altitude of c.1000 m. It also grows in moist places in road sides in shale soil and moist, sandy meadows at an altitude of 300-350 m.

Distribution

In Greece known only from two localities in Western Crete and from the East Aegean islands of Samos and Lesvos. It has been known to occur in Crete for over 350 years, but has only recently been discovered in Samos and Lesvos. Outside Greece, the species is distributed in Cyprus, Israel-Jordan, Lebanon-Syria, Turkey to the Transcaucasia region (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia).

Map



Legal status

The species is protected by the Greek Presidential Decree 67/1981. One of the populations in Crete falls within the Samaria Gorge National Park and is, therefore, protected.

Main threats and conservation status

Threat categories according to IUCN classification scheme, version 3.2:

- 1.3 Tourism & Recreation Areas
- 4.1 Roads & Railroads
- 7.2.4 Abstraction of surface water

According to the Red Data Book of Rare and Threatened Plants of Greece it is characterized as Vulnerable (VU).

Conservation actions carried out in the CARE-MEDIFLORA project

The selected actions include *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation. The *in situ* conservation actions involve eradication of the ornamental species from the area of occupancy of *D. cannabina* and prevention of their re-establishment at the locality between Nea Roumata and Papadiana as well as reinforcement of the population and light fencing to protect the newly planted individuals and the naturally growing young plants (result of natural regeneration of the population). Communication actions targeting the local authorities, inhabitants and visitors of the area were also implemented.

However, damages were caused due to a religious festival that takes place in the vicinity of the plants. Although the reinforcement of the population was repeated the following year, 2018, all the plants were lost during the severe weather conditions of 23-26 February 2019 which caused great destruction in all the region.

Seed collection for *ex situ* conservation was performed for both populations in Crete.

Photos



D. cannabina in flowering; *D. cannabina* habitat; Seedlings of *D. cannabina* ready to be planted



Removal of ornamental species; Light fencing and planting of *D.ca cannabina* seedlings



Information sign at the location of the action