

# Gymnocarpus decandrus (Caryophyllaceae) on Fuerteventura

Dietmar Brandes, Braunschweig

## 1. Introduction

The potential natural vegetation of Fuerteventura is built up by *Euphorbia balsamifera* and *E. canariensis* communities) [Tabaial – Cardonal] up to altitudes of about 500 m (SANTOS GUERRA 2000). This vegetation however is mostly replaced by communities of the class Pegano-Salsoletea. Therefore in the lower zones of Fuerteventura scattered shrub communities of the alliance *Launaea arborescentis*-*Schizogynion sericeae* are dominating, whose characteristic species are:

*Atriplex glauca* var. *ifniensis*  
*Artemisia reptans*  
*Bassia tomentosa* [= *Chenoleoides tomentosa*]  
RR *Convolvulus caput-medusae* (BRANDES 2001)  
*Frankenia capitata*  
R *Gymnocarpus decandrus*  
*Launaea arborescens*  
*Lycium intricatum*  
RR *Pulicaria burchardii* (BRANDES 2004)  
*Salsola orataviensis*  
*Salsola tetrandra*  
*Salsola vermiculata*  
*Suaeda vermiculata*

Rare species are marked with R, very rare species with RR. At the very near coastal areas the arenicolous *Traganum moquinii* is to be found (FRITZSCH & BRANDES 1999, RODRÍGUEZ DELGADO et al. 2000), on rocky ground in the mountains also *Nauplius sericeus* (RODRÍGUEZ DELGADO et al. 2000).

A common alien on road sides, barrancos and also in settlements is *Nicotiana glauca* (BRANDES 2002 a), sometimes also *Maireana brevifolia* (BRANDES 2002 b), *Calotropis procera* and *Ricinus communis* (RODRÍGUEZ DELGADO 2000).

## 2. *Gymnocarpus decandrus*

*Gymnocarpus decandrus* is a relatively rare element of the flora of Fuerteventura. Because of its wide distribution in the arid region between Canary Islands and Pakistan we will show its ecology and phytosociology on Fuerteventura for comparison reasons. *Gymnocarpus decandrus* has the most extensive distribution in the genus (PETRUSSON & THULIN 1996). It is a floral element of the Saharo-Arabian region, which is found on the Canary Islands, in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt on the African mainland, and in Israel, Jordan, S Syria, W Saudi Arabia, N Oman, S Iran, SW Afghanistan and SW Pakistan in Asia.

The correct name of our species is *Gymnocarpus decandrus*, not *Gymnocarpus decander* or *G. decandrum* (PETRUSSON & THULIN 1996). According to SCHÖNFELDER & SCHÖNFELDER (1997) the forma *salsoloides* (Webb ex Christ.) Chaudri was found on Tenerife and also on the Eastern Canary Islands, but PETRUSSON & THULIN (1996) did not recognize this forma and supposed that it is „no more than an environmentally induced modification“.

## 3. *Gymnocarpus decandrus* on Fuerteventura

There are scattered populations on the peninsula Jandía between Esquinzo and Barlovento (KUNKEL 1977), but also dense populations north of La Pared, which were analysed by us. *Gymnocarpus decandrus* occurs on stony slopes in the lower zone of Fuerteventura. The species avoids the direct influence of the sea, but we found it nowhere higher than 150 m above sea level. In its whole area *Gymncarpus decandrus* prefers rocks and stony soils without sand:

Egypt: „stony wadis and slopes“ (BOULOS 1999). MOUSTAFA & KLOPATEK (1995): mention *Gymnocarpus decandrus* as a species only growing on the slopes [not present on terraces, gorges, ridges, wadis or plains] in the Saint Catherine area, southern Sinai, Egypt.

Tunisia: „rochers et pâturages caillouteux désertiques“ (POTTIER-ALAPETITE 1979).

Jordan: „stony slopes overlooking the Dead Sea and Wadi Araba (AL-EISAWI 1998).

Saudi Arabia: „areas without sand...widely distributed in rocky areas“ (CHAUDHARY & AL-JOWAID 1999).

Tab. 1: *Gymnocarpus decandrus* community.

Number of the relevé	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Field number	98/71	98/72	98/73	98/74	98/75	00/79	00/80	00/81	00/82	00/76	00/77	00/78
Microhabitat [G= gully, S= slope + gullies]	G	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	G	S	S
Inclination [°C]	35	30	35	40	40	40	40	40	40	30	35	35
Exposition	W	W	W	W	W	NW	NW	NW	NNW	NW	NW	NW
Area [m <sup>2</sup> ]	160	50	50	100	60	35	30	30	40	16	35	50
Vegetation area [%]	25	20	20	25	20	20	20	20	15	35	20	30
Species number	10	11	10	8	9	9	10	16	13	9	8	11
<b><i>Gymnocarpus decandrus</i></b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>
<u>Differential species of the variant a:</u>												
<i>D Rubia fruticosa</i>	+	+	+	.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	2.1	.	.	.
<i>D Kickxia heterophylla</i>	1.1	+	1.1	1.1	1.1	+	+	+	+	.	.	.
<u>Further species of the class Pegano-Salsoletea:</u>												
<i>Lycium intricatum</i>	1.1	2.1	1.1	.	1.1	+	1.1	.	+	.	+	1.1
<i>Launaea arborescens</i>	2.2	1.1	1.1	1.1	2.1	1.1	.	1.1	.	1.1	.	.
<i>Salsola vermiculata</i>	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	.	.	.	.	1.1	.	2.2
<i>Chenoleoides tomentosa</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	+	+	.	.	.
<i>Forsskaolea angustifolia</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	r	.	.	.	.
<u>Others:</u>												
<i>Helianthemum canariense</i>	.	1.2	1.1	+	+	.	.	+2	.	.	.	.
<i>Lobularia cf. canariensis</i>	.	+	+	1.2	+	.	.	+	+	.	.	.
<i>Lotus lancerottensis</i>	.	r	.	+	.	.	.	+	+	.	.	.
<i>Phagnalon saxatile</i>	r	+	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Ajuga iva</i>	.	.	r	+	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Phagnalon purpurascens</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	+	.	.	1.2	.	.
<i>Aristida coerulescens</i>	+	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Reichardia tingitana</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	r	.	.	.	.
<i>Cuscuta planiflora</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	+2	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Hedypnois cretica</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	r	.	.	.	.
<i>Polycarpaea nivea</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	+	.	.	.
<u>Species of Carrichtero-Amberboion:</u>												
<i>Lotus glinoides</i>	+	+	.	.	.	+	+2	.	.	+	1.2	+
<i>Senecio falciformis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	1.2	1.2	+	+2	1.2	1.2
<i>Trigonella stellata</i>	r	.	.	.	.	+2	.	+2	+	.	+2	.
<i>Medicago laciniata</i>	.	.	.	.	.	1.2	.	+	.	1.2	1.2	1.2
Keimlinge indet.	.	+	+	+	1.1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Asphodelus tenuifolius</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	+°	+	+	.	r
<i>Stipa capensis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	+	.	+	.	.	+°
<i>Mesembryanthemum nodiflorum</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	+	.	1.2
<i>Patellifolia patellaris</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	+°	+°
<i>Plantago ovata</i>	.	.	+	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

<i>Echium bonnetii</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1.1	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Senecio flavus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	+	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Calendula aegyptiaca</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	+2	.	.	.	.
<i>Aizoon canariense</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	+	.
<i>Astragalus hamosus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	+

Relevés in february 1998 and february 2000.

*Gymnocarpus decandrus* is associated with other shrubs like *Lycium intricatum*, *Launaea arborescens*, *Salsola vermiculata*, and *Chenoleoides tomentosa* (see Tabl. 1). It usually dominates these scattered shrub communities (vegetation cover max. 35 %).

*Gymnocarpus decandrus* is without any doubt an element of the class Pegano-Salsoletea (RIVAS-MARTÍNEZ et al. 1983; RODRÍGUEZ DELGADO et al. 2000). Avoiding the dissipation of the class Pegono-Salsoletea, I prefer to value the *Gymnocarpus decandrus* community only as a local phenomenon.

We can distinguish between a variant with *Rubia fruticosa* (No. 1-9) and an inops variant (No. 10-12). The differences are presumably caused by grazing with goats. Low intensity of grazing allows *Rubia fruticosa* and *Kickxia heterophylla* to grow inside small clusters of *Gymnocarpus decandrus*. Growing intensity of grazing perhaps causes consumption and local extirpation of these two species.

Species combination of our Tab. 1 shows distinct similarities to the Chenoleoido tomentosae-Salsoletum vermiculatae.

The occurrence of *Gymnocarpus decandrus* on Fuerteventura was only documented with 2 relevés by RODRÍGUEZ DELGADO et al. (2000) in the Frankenio-Zygophylletum gaetuli (Tab. IV; cover-abundance index 1) and in the Chenoleo tomentosae-Suaedetum vermiculatae (Tab. XI, cover-abundance index 1). SUNDING (1972) found it also in this association on Gran Canaria.

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Author's address:

Prof. Dr. Dietmar Brandes  
Working Group for Vegetation Ecology  
Institute for Plant Biology  
Technical University Braunschweig

D-38023 Braunschweig

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Zeitschrift/Journal: [Brandes Dietmar\\_\\_diverse botanische Arbeiten](#)

Jahr/Year: 2004

Band/Volume: [39\\_2004](#)

Autor(en)/Author(s): Brandes Dietmar

Artikel/Article: [Gymnocarpos decandrus \(Caryophyllaceae\) on Fuerteventura 1-6](#)