

Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

Thrixspermum congestum

Conservation status

Australia: Not listed

Northern Territory: Vulnerable



Photo: D. Liddle

Description

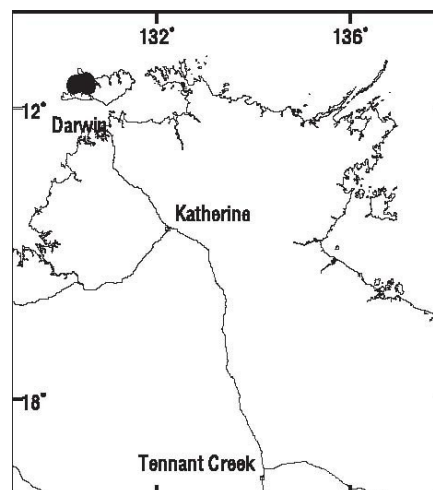
Thrixspermum congestum is an epiphytic orchid forming small clumps. The stems are sparsely branched, flattened to 15 cm long. There are 6-15 leaves per plant, leathery, often yellowish green. The inflorescence grows to 10 cm long, and is erect and wiry. The flowers open together, are about 15 mm across, cream or white, and fragrant. The flowers last about one day and are produced in sporadic groups.

Flowering: Feb.

Distribution

This species is known from Queensland, the NT and New Guinea (Jones 1988). In the Northern Territory, there are specimen records from only two localities, on Melville Island, with unvouchered records from a further six sites (four from Bathurst Is and two from Melville Is) (Liddle *et al.* 1994; Woinarski *et al.* 2003). The grid references of the Bathurst Island sites are unknown.

Conservation reserves where reported:
None.



Known locations of *Thrixspermum congestum*.

Ecology

This species grows in lowland rainforests and also on mangroves. It is usually found in humid, airy situations, often in exposed positions on small branches.

Conservation assessment

There is little information available on the status of this species. No further populations were uncovered during extensive surveys on the Tiwi Island between 1998-2001 (Woinarski *et al.* 2003), and its rainforest habitat has been well sampled (Russell-Smith 1991; Liddle *et al.* 1994), suggesting that its apparent restriction may be real. However, there is an element of data deficiency with this species as flowers are recorded as lasting only approximately 10 hours.

This species qualifies as **Vulnerable** (under criteria D1+2) based on:

- an estimated population size of <1000 individuals; and
- an area of occupancy estimated to be <20 km².

Threatening processes

This species is an epiphyte and is susceptible to cyclonic events. As a wet rainforest species, impacts on habitat by feral animal activity or changes in hydrology will affect population numbers although these threats are not considered imminent. As an orchid, pressure from horticultural collectors may be a threat.

Conservation objectives and management

A Recovery Plan for this species, and other threatened plants on the Tiwi Islands, is due to be released in 2007, but many actions in its draft are currently being implemented.

Research into the status and extent of the population, and the impacts of possible threatening factors, is required. A monitoring program should be established for at least representative populations.

Living material has been collected for the Darwin Botanic Gardens. Availability of stock commercially may protect species from horticultural harvesting and stochastic events.

Complied by

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References

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- Russell-Smith, J. (1991). Classification, species richness, and environmental relations of monsoon rain forest in northern Australia. *Journal of Vegetation Science* 2, 259-278.
- Woinarski, J., Brennan, K., Cowie, I., Kerrigan, R., and Hempel, C. (2003). *Biodiversity conservation on the Tiwi islands, Northern Territory. Part 1. Plants and environments*. 144 pp. (Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environment, Darwin.)