

Hottentot Fig

Species Description

Scientific name: *Carpobrotus edulis*

AKA: Sour fig, Ffigysen yr Hotentot (Welsh)

Native to: South Africa

Habitat: Coastal cliffs and sand dunes

Mainly coastal plant with distinctive 3 angled succulent leaves and large yellow flowers in early summer that fade to pink. Can be confused with sea fig, another non-native coastal plant.

Introduced into gardens as early as the 17th century, but not recorded in the wild until 1886. Spread through discarded garden material but was also used in some places to stabilise dunes. Out-competes native species. Control efforts can result in habitat erosion if re-vegetation is not carried out (particularly on coastal cliffs).

Commonly found in mild, coastal areas. Forms dense mats on cliffs and dunes especially in south-west England. Reproduction commonly vegetative; a single plant can dominate an area up to 50m across.

Hottentot fig is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England, Wales and Scotland. As such, it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause this species to grow in the wild.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



Key ID Features

Fleshy and succulent leaves, triangular in cross section



Mostly found on coastal cliffs and dunes



Flowers start yellow and fade to pale pink

Identification throughout the year

Identification varies little year round. Evergreen plant which flowers between May and July.

Non-flowering



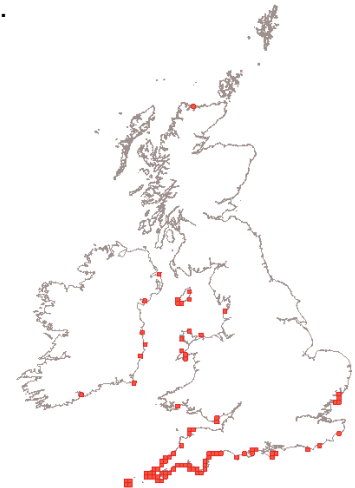
Flowering



Distribution

Limited. Only in coastal areas, particularly in south-west England. Scottish distribution very limited due to frost sensitivity.

Source: NBN Gateway. Check website for current distribution



Similar Species

Glasswort
Native
(*Salicornia* species)



Rounded segments

Fleshy stem

Branches in opposite pairs

Sea Blite
Native
(*Suaeda* species)



Fleshy alternate leaves
half-cylindrical or cylindrical, not
triangular in cross section

Sea Figs

Same family as Hottentot Fig and very difficult to distinguish. As these are also non-native, identification may not be necessary. Flowers deep magenta as opposed to pink, yellow or white. Smaller (3.5cm to 6.5cm diameter as opposed to 4.5cm to 10cm).



References and further reading:

Blamey, M, Fitter, R and Fitter, A (2003) "*The Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland. The Complete Guide to the British and Irish Flora*" A & C Black
Preston, C D, Pearman, D A and Dines, T A (editors) (2002) "*New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora*". Oxford University Press
Stace, C (1999) "*Field Flora of the British Isles*". Cambridge University Press