

Euphorbia canariensis



Euphorbia canariensis, commonly known as the Canary Island spurge, Hercules club or in Spanish cardón, is a succulent member of the genus *Euphorbia* and family Euphorbiaceae endemic to the Canary Islands. It is the plant symbol of the island of Gran Canaria.

Origin and Habitat: *Euphorbia canariensis* is endemic to canary islands.

Habitat: This species grows natively in the arid and humid environment of the narrow coastal belt, from sea level to 1100 metres. It occurs in dry lava formations on the barren shores and mainly on the south facing mountain slopes on all islands. It is one of the most abundant plants on the sea-cliffs.

Common Names include:

ENGLISH: Hercules Club, Canary Candelaber Spurge, Canary Island Spurge



Description: *Euphorbia canariensis* is a small succulent shrub, 1 to 3(-4) m high. It clumps profusely from the base, one trunk may produce more than 150 branches as thick as a man's arm.

Stems: Fleshy, stout, highly succulent, columnar, upright growing, cactus-like. They are deep green to reddish, 4 (rarely 5 or 6) angled up to 8 cm in diameter slightly spiralled. The surfaces, which are from 2 to 5 cm broad, are plain with a clean and smooth epidermis. The edges are obtuse and of a brown colour. The lateral branches form an angle at their base, but are straight in the rest of their growth.

Spines: This plant is furnished with dark shining spines in pairs. Perfectly regular, straight to cow-horn shaped, spreading laterally in rows along the four corners of the columns.

Flowers: Dark red to reddish-green in monoecious heads, surrounded by an

involucrum consisting of 1 leaf with 5 division, which have externally 5 glands alternating with them. Males naked monoandrous, articulated with their pedicel surrounding the female, which is in the centre. Females naked solitary. Ovarium stalked. Stigma three forked.

Fruit: Maroon red on adult plants. The fruits hang out of the involucrum and each contain one suspended seed.

Remarks: It's one of the more poisonous spurges. The latex which is very bitter and acrid contains diterpenes and is considered highly toxic.

