

Pride of Tenerife

Echium pininana

Family

Boraginaceae (borage)

Also known as

Giant bugloss, tree echium, pine echium, giant viper's bugloss, giant bugloss, tower of jewels, pride of Tenerife, tajinaste, taginaste,

Where is it originally from?

Canary Islands

What does it look like?

Shrubby herbaceous biennial or triennial (<2-4 m) growing from a deep taproot. Narrowly lance-shaped, deeply veined rosette leaves (25-50 cm), are covered in fine, rough hairs. Stem leaves are similar to rosette leaves but are narrower and shorter (10-25 cm long). Main, unbranched, cylindrical flowering stem resembles a woody trunk (1-3 m tall). Biennial or triennial, it typically remains as a tall rosette the first year, flowers the second or third year, and then dies after shedding its seed. Distinctive for its very tall flower spikes (2-3m) carrying a dense mass of leaves and small flowers that are pink in bud, and pale blue to mauve once fully opened. Each flower produces 4 prickly, brown, 1-seeded nutlets.

Why is it weedy?

Self-seeds easily to form clusters of plants. Seed set has been reported in excess of 200000 per plant, and seeds remain viable in the soil for many years.

How does it spread?

Seed is spread short distances by wind. Is also deliberately planted.

What damage does it do?

Forms dense stands, crowding out native species. In addition to the live foliage, the dead leaves blanket the ground and keep sunlight from reaching any of the native plants that otherwise might sprout and grow there.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Prefers sunny habitats with moderately moist conditions. Thrives on steep and disturbed hillsides in coastal habitats. Limited by harsh winters and full shade.

What can I do to get rid of it?

Cut off flowerheads before seeding.



www.weedbusters.org.nz



Photo: Carolyn Lewis



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Photo: Trevor James