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ABSTRACTS

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3.5 = Alien plants new for European and Sicilian flora

Vivienne Spadaro¹, Patrizia Campisi¹, Francesco M. Raimondo²

¹Department STEBICEF/Section of Botany, Zoology and Anthropology, University of Palermo, Via Archirafi 38, 90123 Palermo, Italy; ²PLANTA/Research, Documentation and Training Center, Piazzetta Cairoli 11, 90123 Palermo, Italy

The knowledge about alien flora of Italy has been recently summarised by (1). The list of the taxa referred to in the electronic appendix of that article, provides for each taxon the appropriate alien status and the regions in which each taxon is present, on the basis of literature, or specimens preserved in Italian herbaria. Other contributions as *notulae* have been published in the specific section of the *Informatore Botanico italiano* and, since 2016, of *Italian Botanist*. In this contribution, two new cases of alien plants are presented, one for the Italian, and European territory, the other for the Sicily Region alone. These are respectively *Xanthosoma sorbifolia* Bunge (Sapindaceae), and *Commelina communis* L. (Commelinaceae).

Xanthoceras sorbifolia is the only species of its genus. It is native to China, and introduced in some gardens of different countries, including Italy, where it is present in Sicily only. The plant has a shrubby or arborescent habit, alternate, pinnate leaves, with 10-20 lanceolate leaflets, sessile. The flowers are grouped in axillary racemes and have a pentapartite, white corolla, with petals showing a small red spot at the base. The fruit is a globose, trilocular capsule, with a hook point, and yellowish when ripe. Each loculus contains 1-2 (-3) showy sub-spherical seeds, of dark brown colour. One individual is cultivated in the park of Villa Whitaker to Malfitano (Palermo). A second individual is preserved in the Botanical Garden of Palermo, introduced in 1997 by seed produced from a plant surveyed in a dendrological park by one of the authors (2). The site of spontaneization of this taxon is in the same garden where it was introduced, and cultivated (3), at a distance of about 30 m from the cultivated individual, in the rock garden, where it was neglected for years. There, the population of *X. sorbifolia* – estimated in about one hundred individuals of different ages, and partly already in full fruiting – occupies an area of about 60 m². Outside the city of Palermo, to date, there are no reports of the taxon.

Commelina communis has long been known in various Italian and European regions, both as a naturalized, and as a casual alien. In Italy, its presence was known from many regions except Marche, Molise, and Puglia. Known as “Asiatic dayflower”, it is a perennial herbaceous rhizomatous, with fleshy, violet, creeping and ascending stems. The leaves are relatively large, measuring 8-13 cm in length, and are thick and fleshy. They are lanceolate or elliptic in shape with pointed tips and blunt, clasping bases that form a sheath around the stem. The flowers are relatively small, measuring approximately 1.5 cm in width. This bilaterally symmetrical flower shows six irregularly sized anthers and three petals: two, deep blue, upper petals and one lower, highly reduced, white petal. The base of this bloom is enfolded in a green, heart-shaped bract and is supported by three green sepals. Asiatic dayflower grows best in open and disturbed areas, along roadsides, and woodland borders. It was introduced in central and southeastern Europe, and eastern North America, where it has spread to become a noxious weed.

In Sicily it was already collected in 2017 in Palermo, on the edge of a busy city street in the center. At the same time it was observed spontaneous in areas uncultivated within the Botanical Garden.

1) G. Galasso et al. (2018) *Plant Biosyst.*, 152 (3), 556-592

2) F.M. Raimondo (1997) *Il Giardino di Villa Malfitano*. Fondazione Whitaker, Palermo

3) F.M. Raimondo, P. Mazzola (2001) *Quad. Bot. Amb. Appl.*, 10 (1999), 149-165