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# *Euphorbia hypericifolia* L. and *Opuntia anahuacensis* Griffiths: two new, potentially invasive species in Croatia

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During last few decades, the spreading and findings of invasive species has become faster than ever. Many new non-native species in regional floras can escape the attention at the moment of their first introduction but it is usually easy to record their subsequent spreading and their invasiveness. Here we present two cases of new, potentially invasive, plant species for the Croatian flora: *Euphorbia hypericifolia* (Fig. 1, 2) and *Opuntia anahuacensis* (Fig. 4, 5).

We combine the results of our field observations with the records from the open data platform iNaturalist. The distribution maps for these two new alien species in Croatia is given.

## EUPHORBIA HYPERICIFOLIA

For *Euphorbia hypericifolia* L. (Euphorbiaceae), there is certainty that the introduction and initial spreading of this tropical and subtropical American species has started from the town of Šibenik in North Dalmatia. It was recorded in the Garden centre Dubrava for the first time in August 2022. Just one year later, in September 2023 it was found in Vodice, as well as in Podstrana near Split in central Dalmatia (Fig. 3) *Euphorbia hypericifolia* is an annual species that is possibly unintentionally reproduced in nurseries within potted plants. On all localities it has been observed growing in urban ruderal vegetation and on roads along the seashore. For the moment, this non-native species is still not invasive but further spread could be expected.



Fig. 1. Detail of inflorescence.



Fig. 2. Leaves with inflorescence.

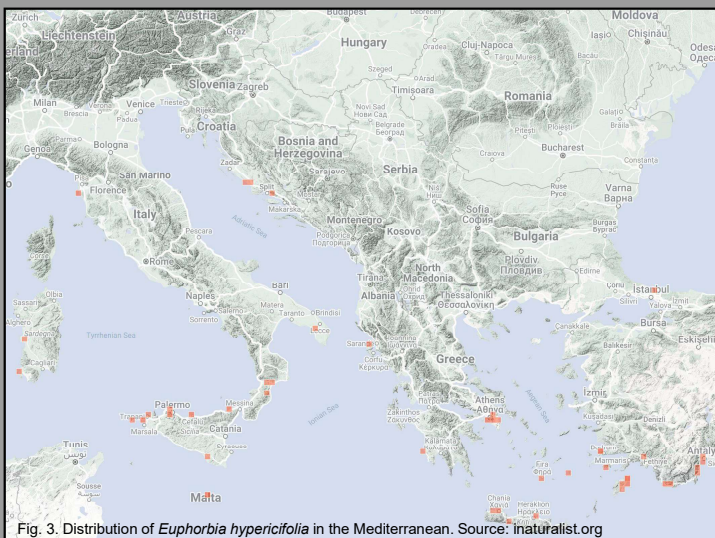


Fig. 3. Distribution of *Euphorbia hypericifolia* in the Mediterranean. Source: iNaturalist.org

## OPUNTIA ANAHUACENSIS

As far as the second case is concerned, *Opuntia anahuacensis* Griffiths (Cactaceae), given its extremely vast distribution in Croatia, it is difficult to ascertain when and where the process of naturalization took place. The native range of this coastal prickly pear is southeast Texas in southern United States, even though it could extend much eastwards.

Probably, it has been introduced as an ornamental plant and subsequently has started a rapid spread soon becoming potentially invasive on the coastal part of Croatia and the islands (Fig. 6). Similarly to what happened with other *Opuntia* species in Croatia, *O. anahuacensis* has been misidentified as the very similar and possibly related *O. stricta* (Haw.) Haw. (Fig. 7) but also as the extremely different *O. lindheimeri* Engelm (Fig. 8). As regards, researches aiming at a better formalization of the differences with *O. stricta* (Haw.) Haw. are underway.

## AKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to Dr. David J. Ferguson for his priceless help with *Opuntia anahuacensis*.



Fig. 4. Habit of *Opuntia anahuacensis*.



Fig. 7. Cladodes with fruits of *Opuntia stricta*.



Fig. 5. Cladodes and flowers of *Opuntia anahuacensis*.

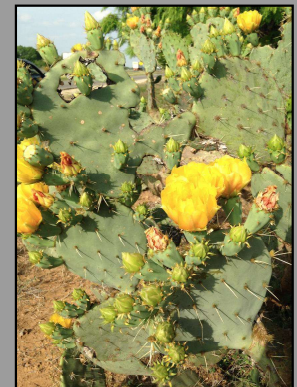


Fig. 8. Habit of *Opuntia lindheimeri*.

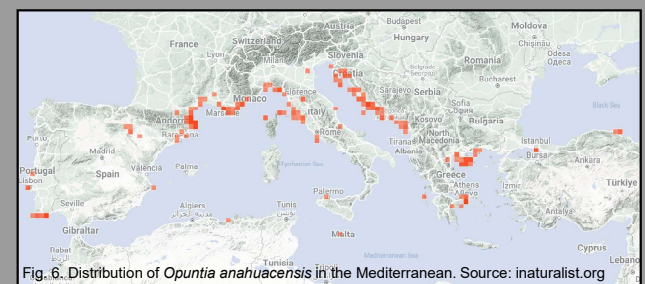


Fig. 6. Distribution of *Opuntia anahuacensis* in the Mediterranean. Source: iNaturalist.org