



Red seaweed

Acanthophora spicifera (Vahl) Børgesen 1910

KEY FEATURES



- Erect seaweed up to 40 cm tall, branches 2–3 mm wide, sparingly branched with spined lateral branches, no spines on main axes
- Colour highly variable with shades of red, purple, yellow, orange, or brown; often very dark in intertidal, high-motion areas, and lighter in shallow areas with low water motion and reflective sandy or silty bottoms
- Inhabits a wide range of substrates from reef to mudflats worldwide
- Known from places with high water motion as well as calm tidepools
- Occurs on hard substrates (rocks, basalt ledges, dead coral heads) and epiphytic on other algae, or floating in large mats
- Typically, intertidal to subtidal, 1–8 m, down to 22 m depth in the Virgin Islands (West Tropical Atlantic)

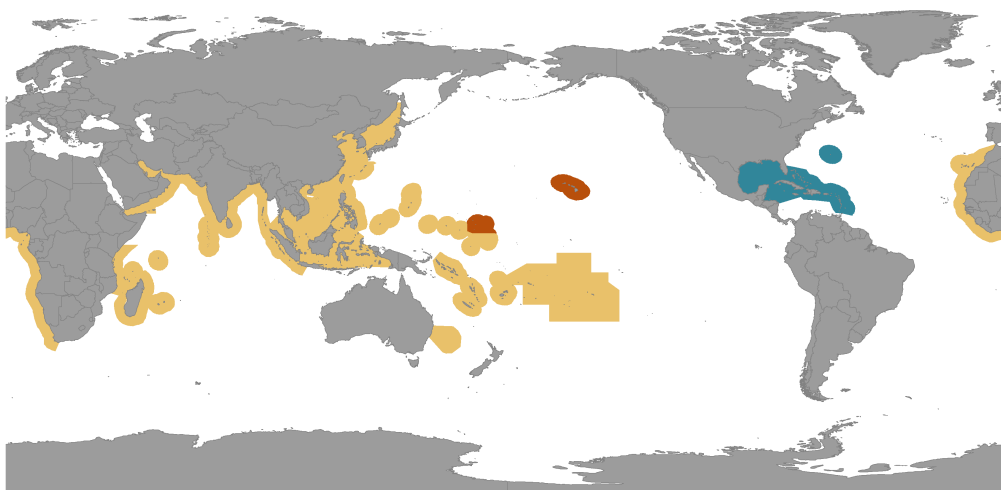
PATHWAY

✓ ballast water

✓ biofouling

✓ aquaculture transfer

Native
Cryptogenic
Non-indigenous





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IMPACTS



Environmental impacts

This species adapts to a wide range of conditions which allows it to invade a diverse variety of habitats. It has a high recruitment rate and has displaced many native species of seaweed in Hawai'i where it has now become a widespread and dominant species



Human health impacts

None known



Social & cultural impacts

None known



Economic impacts

Through displacement of native algae may indirectly affect the abundance of fish and invertebrates of commercial interest

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

- Complex life history, with a triphasic alternation of generations; has distinct haploid sexual and diploid asexual reproductive stages, allowing species to have a high reproductive output, and can spread through fragmentation due to brittle morphology

DISTRIBUTION

May be present in the Republic of the Marshall Islands

Native range

Type locality St Croix, Virgin Islands; found around central America, Mexico, Caribbean, and Bermuda

Non-indigenous range

Non-indigenous in Hawai'i, cryptogenic distributions in Australia, Africa, Asia, Indian Ocean, and the Pacific islands

CREDITS AND REFERENCES (click reference for more information)

Images

Modified from, top: M. M. Littler, D. S. Littler ([CC0 1.0](#)), bottom: J Smith from [Goodwin et al. \(2015\)](#)

References

[Abbot \(1999\)](#), [Weijerman et al. \(2008\)](#)