

A variant of the native sea-celery,  
*Apium prostratum* (Umbelliferae)

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Our country's forms of this common coastal plant are puzzling in the extreme – there are more nicknames on the AK folders than you would find at an RAF (or Navy, for that matter) reunion.

Nevertheless, one of the variants does possess a so-called "hard name", that of *Apium prostratum* subsp. *prostratum* var. *prostratum*. Widespread in Australia, this variety is distinguished by its very narrowly divided leaves (Hastings & Powell 1992). As can be seen from Figure 1, it is not a particularly small or slender plant.

There are three NZ specimens of var. *prostratum* New Zealand in AK, all from the Rangaunu Harbour region and collected by Matthews & Carse. The only one with a date is AK 164816, obtained in 1914 "from a wiwi mudflat near Okiro."

In his "Manual" Cheeseman called this variety *Apium prostratum* var.  $\beta$  and referred to an illustration (Icon. Pl. (1841) t. 305), which I have not seen but presume to be of Australian material.

I have not checked other herbaria for more New Zealand specimens but the plant is certainly very rare in this country and finding it, probably up north somewhere, would redeem even the most dismal of coastal trudges.

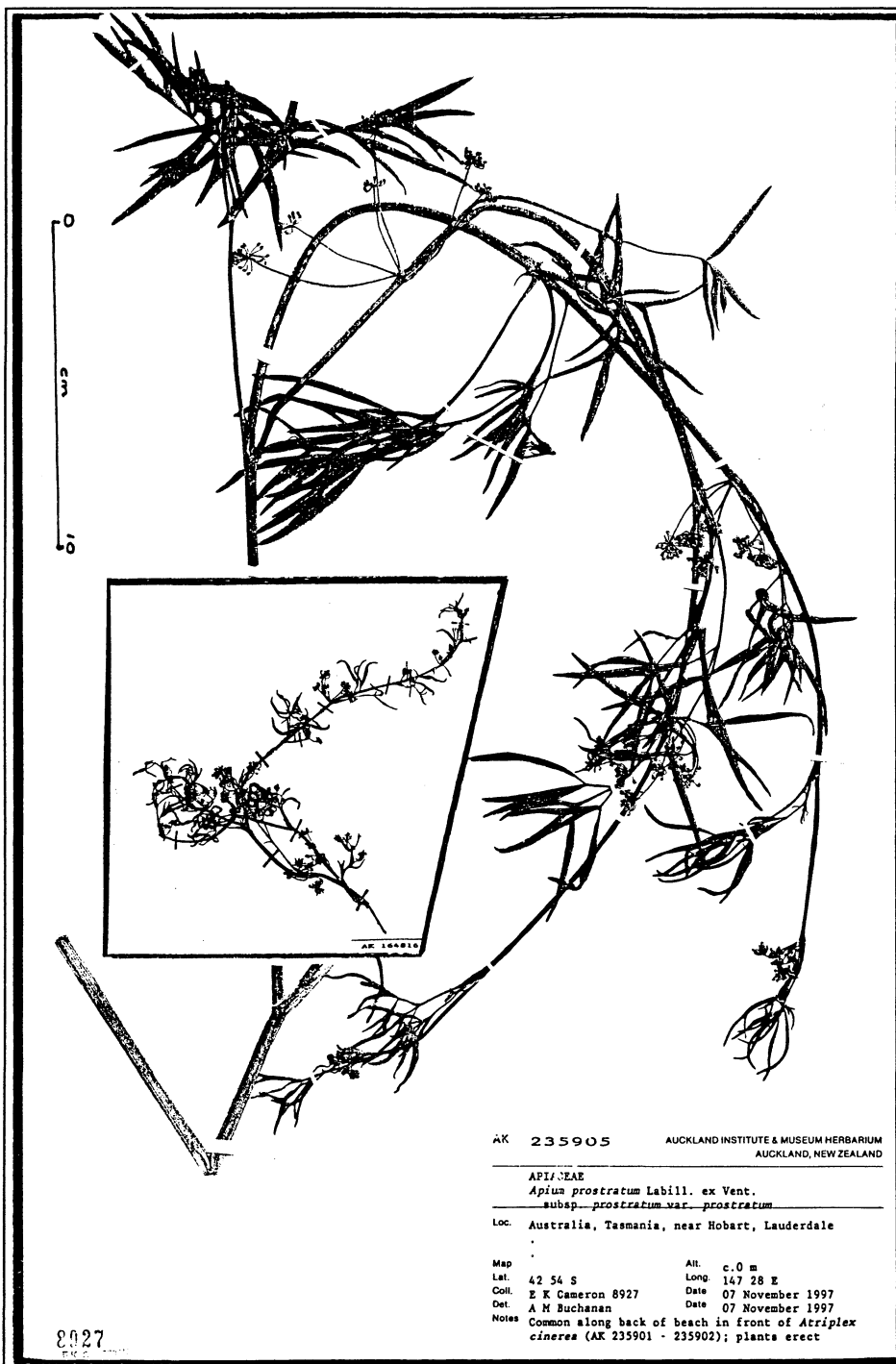


Figure 1. *Apium prostratum* subsp. *prostratum* var. *prostratum* (Tasmania, Cameron 8927). Inset (reduced size): AK 16481.

Reference

Hastings, S. M. & Powell, J. N. 1992. *Apium* pp. 109-110 in G. J. Harden (ed.), Flora of New South Wales. Royal Botanic Gardens.

