GIERSCH MALLOW
*Sphaeralcea gierischii* N.D.
Atwood and S. Welsh
Plant Symbol = Not Assigned

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Idaho and Utah Plant Materials Program

Alternate Names
Giersch’s globemallow

Uses
There are no known human uses of Giersch mallow. It is palatable to livestock and wildlife, especially in drought years when other forages are reduced or unavailable (USDI-FWS, 2010).

Status
Giersch mallow became a candidate for federal protection in 2008 (USDI-FWS, 2008). Listing is considered warranted; however, higher priority listing actions have precluded the proposed and final listing rules for the species (USDI-FWS, 2010). The species has a listing priority of 2 (high magnitude with imminent threat).

Consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant’s current status (e.g., threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description
*General:* Mallow family (Malvaceae). Giersch mallow is a perennial forb growing from a woody caudex, with the inflorescence reaching 40 to 100 cm (16 to 39 in) tall. The stems are often dark reddish purple. The leaves are 3 to 5 lobed, bright green, and oval shaped in outline. The leaf base is often heart shaped. The blades are 1.2 to 4 cm (0.5 to 1.6 in) long and 1 to 5 cm (0.4 to 2.0 in) wide. The flowers are large with orange petals, 15 to 25 mm (0.6 to 1.0 in) long (Welsh et al., 2003).

*Distribution:* Giersch mallow is known from nine populations totaling approximately 60 acres. Eight populations are located in northern Mohave County, Arizona, and one population is in Washington County, Utah. There are between 7,000 and 12,000 individuals in Arizona, and the Utah population is believed to be approximately 5,000 to 8,000 individuals (USDI-FWS, 2010).

For current distribution, consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

*Habitat:* Giersch mallow is found in warm desert shrub plant communities of the northern Mohave Desert at approximately 1,090 m (3,576 ft) (Welsh et al., 2003).

*Adaptation:* Giersch mallow is an obligate gypsophile (a plant limited to gypsum based soils) restricted to outcrops of the Harrisburg Member of the Kaibab Formation. The area receives approximately 13 to 20 cm (5 to 8 in) of annual precipitation (WRCC, 2011).

*Management* Giersch mallow is threatened by habitat destruction due to gypsum mining, and habitat degradation from off-road vehicle (ORV) use and livestock grazing. Habitat for Giersch mallow continues to be...
destroyed by gypsum mining, and reclaimed sites following mining activities may not provide suitable habitat.

**Pests and Potential Problems**
Gierisch mallow is palatable to wildlife and livestock. The flowering stems are grazed primarily in drought years, reducing seed production and recruitment opportunities (USDI-FWS, 2010).

**Environmental Concerns**
Climate change could negatively impact this and other species with restricted distributions.

**Seed and Plant Production**
Life history and germination studies are needed for this species. Reproduction, pollination systems and seed dispersal mechanisms are unknown.

**References**
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2008. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; review of native species that are candidates for listing as endangered or threatened; annual notice of findings on resubmitted petitions; annual descriptions of progress on listing actions. In: Federal Register. 73(238): 75176-75178.


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