

# *Kunkeliella subsucculenta* Stearn

## A rare and poorly known succulent

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The genus *Kunkeliella* pertains to the Santalaceae family and is made of shrubby, halophytes, semi-parasitic looking like *Ephedra*, reaching 80 cm up to 3 m high (*K. retamoides*), with small, scaly leaves. Inflorescences axillary, with a single tiny, hardly visible flower. Hermaphrodite flowers with 5 parts. The fruit is a tiny and fleshy stone fruit 4-5 mm in diameter. Four species are actually known (*Kunkeliella canariensis*, *K. psilotoclada*, *K. retamoides* and *K. subsucculenta*), the only one being considered as a succulent plant is: *K. subsucculenta*.

• Except for *Kunkeliella retamoides*, we can consider that the other species are very rare, some are in danger of extinction. They grow close to the sea, at an altitude between 10 m and 800 m, on coastal cliffs of volcanic origin.



*Kunkeliella subsucculenta*, fl. habitat, Tenerife (Photo : J.L.).



*Kunkeliella subsucculenta*, habitat, Tenerife (Photo : J.L.).



*Kunkeliella subsucculenta*, habitat, Tenerife (Photo : J.L.).

#### • SHORT DESCRIPTION

Shrub halophytic, achieving 80 cm high and 1 m wide, sturdy and densely branched out and erected, on a caudiciform base of 4 cm with small, slightly succulent leaves. Main stem ligneous, brown to greyish. Secondary twigs fleshy, greenish-grey to greenish-yellow. Inflorescence axillary. Flowers hermaphrodite with small, greenish bracts. The fruit is a tiny and fleshy stone fruit 4 mm in diameter.

• *Kunkeliella subsucculenta* is an endemic species from Tenerife and grows in a very reduced habitat, close to the sea (at approximately 150m distance), between 10 m and 70 m in altitude, on coastal cliffs of volcanic origin. VERY RARE AND VULNERABLE.

#### • ETYMOLOGY

The genus *Kunkeliella* is dedicated to Mary-Anne and Günther Kunkel, both great botanists. Mary-Anne Kunkel is a famous painter, her drawings and paintings of a great sensibility were spread out in many works, journals and books. Günther Kunkel, founder of the ASCAN (Canarian Association for the Protection of the Nature wrote numerous books, published articles and journals and is doubtless the current person most famous and competent in the field of the Canary Islands botany.

Fate made that they are now my most illustrious neighbours because they also live in Almeria province. This article is dedicated to my friends Günther and Mary Anne, and I thank them for having worked and given so much to the Canary Islands.

Text & Photos: J.L.