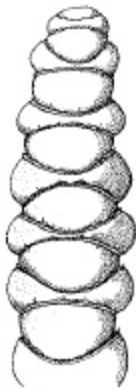


IN BRIEF - FLORA

WA PLANT MAKES THE TOP 10 NEW SPECIES LIST

Every year, the International Institute for Species Exploration, which is based at Arizona State University, USA, announces a list of the 'Top 10 New Species'. They are chosen from the thousands of species described in the preceding calendar year, on the basis of unique attributes, surprising facts or peculiar names. The 2008 list included a new samphire from the Little Sandy Desert in WA, *Tecticornia bibenda*.

This plant made the list because of its name. The large, fleshy, segmented stems reminded its discoverers of the 'Michelin Man', the logo of Michelin Tyres. The company has given this character the name Bibendum, from the latin words 'ad bibendum' (for drinking) and this was used as the basis for the species name. It



is not known what the company thinks about a new plant being named after its logo!

The 'Michelin Man' samphire grows beside saline or gypsiferous lakes in the Little Sandy Desert and was discovered during the recent biological survey of the region. It is also unusual among samphires in that it appears that it may have a C4 rather than a C3 photosynthetic pathway - this adaptation would help it cope with desert conditions. Current threats to the populations are mainly from trampling by camels and burning, especially where the plants are growing adjacent to spinifex hummocks.

Ill: from *Nuytsia* 16 (2) inflorescence