

Interactive comment on “Colonization of an empty island: how does a plant with a plastic gender system respond?” by M. Philipp and H. Adersen

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To be honest, I have to disagree with the authors' opinion that if a *H. peploides* branch breaks off it will most likely simply die. Based on my experience with *H. peploides* I can state that very often it is easier for *H. peploides* to be established from a clonal fragment than from seed. In fact, in some experimental work with *H. peploides* we used clonal fragments disrupted from natural growing plants (Sánchez-Vilas, J., Retuerto, R. 2009. *Plant Biology* 11: 243-254; Sánchez-Vilas, J. Retuerto, R. 2012. *Ecological Research* 27: 163-171). Clonal fragments may contain many regenerating buds together with an important amount of stored resources, which greatly facilitate to become established. In our studied sites, on sandy beaches, propagation by vegetative means was generally easier and more rapid than by seed (poor or slow germination, dormancy or low

C4517

viability problems). However, I recognized that the different soil conditions at Surtsey can do that the things were different there. According to NASA scientists monitoring the erosion of Surtsey with instruments aboard aircraft and satellites, waves have eroded short cliffs along the southern coast, and rain washed debris has created a peninsula of sand that extends to the north. They state that Surtsey's terrain is unstable and that a single winter storm can dramatically alter the coastline. Then, it seems that wind erosion is not the only disturbance that may break up individuals of *H. peploides*. Further, I would like to remind to authors that even for many tree species trunks in a forest cannot be identified as true genetic individuals (genets) since trunks can be interconnected below-ground (ramets), being a single genetic individual.

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