

Pistia stratiotes

COMMON NAME

water lettuce

FAMILY

Araceae

AUTHORITY

Pistia stratiotes L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Free-floating aquatic plant, with thick pale green rounded leaves that form a rosette (lettuce like).

DISTRIBUTION

Nationally eradicated, previously known from Tauranga and Hokianga, Northland.

HABITAT

Still and slow-flowing water bodies in warm areas.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Free floating perennial herb. Plants are stoloniferous with daughter plants often attached. Leaves are velvety hairy, pale yellow-green, often with a spongy thickened base. Roots are long and finely divided. Flowers are small (about 1 cm long) and inconspicuous, arranged as a spike enclosed by a hairy green bract.

SIMILAR TAXA

None.

FLOWERING

Late summer

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

FRUITING

Not seen in New Zealand

LIFE CYCLE

Older stolons between individual plants decay to release young plants. Also spreads by seed overseas.

YEAR NATURALISED

1975

ORIGIN

Throughout the tropics.



Pistia stratiotes. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Pistia stratiotes. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental pond and aquarium plant.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Notify Ministry for Primary Industries if found.

NATIONAL PEST PLANT ACCORD SPECIES

This plant is listed in the 2020 National Pest Plant Accord. The National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) is an agreement to prevent the sale and/or distribution of specified pest plants where either formal or casual horticultural trade is the most significant way of spreading the plant in New Zealand. For up to date information and an electronic copy of the 2020 Pest Plant Accord manual (including plant information and images) visit the [MPI website](#).

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Champion et al (2012). Freshwater Pests of New Zealand. NIWA publication.

<http://www.niwa.co.nz/freshwater-and-estuaries/management-tools/identification-guides-and-fact-sheets/freshwater-pest-species>.

DiTomaso JM, EA Healy (2003). Aquatic and riparian weeds of the west. University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Publication 3421, 462pp.

Johnson PN, Brooke PA (1989). Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington. 319pp.

Connor, H. E.; Dawson, M. I.; Keating, R. D.; Gill L. S. (1996).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pistia-stratiotes/>