

# Alisma plantago-aquatica

## COMMON NAME

water plantain

## FAMILY

Alismataceae

## AUTHORITY

*Alisma plantago-aquatica* L.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

## NVS CODE

ALIPLA

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

A marginal aquatic plant, with wide lance-shaped leaves, with many tiny pale lilac flowers held on a pyramid-shaped inflorescence, much taller than the rest of the plant.

## DISTRIBUTION

Scattered and locally common from Northland to northern Southland, but absent from large parts of southern margins of still and slow flowing water bodies and wetlands in eastern North Island and eastern South Island.

## HABITAT

Margins of still and slow flowing water bodies and wetlands.

## FEATURES

Leafy emergent perennial herb up to c. 1 m high, although non-flowering plants are much shorter. Aerial parts die off over winter to the rootstock. Leaves all basal, broad ovate 8-20 × 3-10 cm, with a rounded base with a long petiole up to or exceeding the leaf blade. Petiole is semi-circular in cross-section (D-shaped). Inflorescence a large, much-branched panicle; branches whorled. Flowers usually pale lilac, c. 1 cm across. C. 20 rounded and flattened seeds (achenes) c. 2.5 mm long, in a dense circular head (Croasdale et al., 1994).

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Alisma lanceolatum* has narrower leaves and pink rather than lilac coloured flowers. *Sagittaria platyphylla* has larger flowers on a smaller inflorescence and triangular petioles

## FLOWERING

Summer

## FLOWER COLOURS

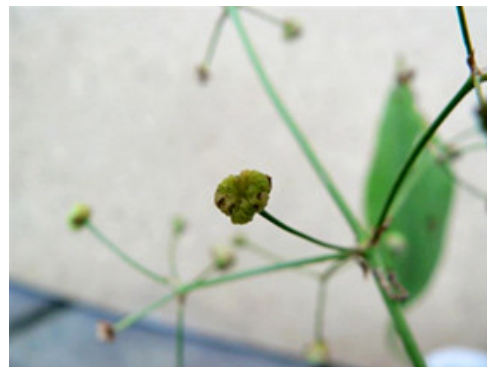
Lilac, Red/Pink, White

## FRUITING

Summer to autumn

## LIFE CYCLE

Spreads by waterfowl and water dispersed seed.



Taupo Swamp, Plimmerton. Apr 2007.  
Photographer: Robyn Smith



Taupo Swamp, Plimmerton. Apr 2007.  
Photographer: Robyn Smith

## YEAR NATURALISED

1929

## ORIGIN

Native to Northern Temperate regions and Australia.

## REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Possibly ornamental pond plant, or a seed or soil contaminant.

## CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Rarely problematic and normally controlled in New Zealand.

## ATTRIBUTION

Prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Aston, H.I. (1977). Aquatic plants of Australia. A guide to the identification of the aquatic ferns and flowering plants of Australia, both native and naturalised. Melbourne University Press. 368pp.

Croasdale, H., Flint E. A. and Racine, M. M. (1994). Flora of New Zealand Volume 3: Freshwater algae, chlorophyta, desmids with ecological comments on their habitats, Staurodesmus Staurastrum and the Filamentous desmids. Manaaki Whenua Press: Lincoln, New Zealand.

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

Preston, C.D.; Croft, J.M. (1997). Aquatic plants in Britain and Ireland. Harley Books, 365pp.

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alisma-plantago-aquatica/>