

Alnus glutinosa

COMMON NAMES

common alder

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Widespread, especially common in the Waikato and Wairarapa, where it can be a problem weed.

FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tree to c. 15m high (to c. 20m in cultivation). Bark dark brown, strongly fissured. Young shoots glabrous but glandular-viscid. Winter buds shortstalked, purplish. Petiole 7-15 mm long, often purplish. Lamina 4-10 x 2.5-10cm (to 14 x 13cm on vigorous vegetative shoots), broadly oblong to obovate, plicate in bud, hairy on veins beneath at first, soon glabrous except for tufts axillary hairs, serrulate to coarsely serrate, lobulate on basal vegetative shoots; veins in 6-7 pairs, prominently raised beneath; base usually cuneate; apex rounded to retuse. Buds stipitate, not enclosing female catkins in winter. Male catkins 3-8 together behind shoot apices, 2.5-7cm long (to 12 cm in cultivation), cylindric, opening in spring before lvs; peduncles to c. 5 cm long; bracts peltate, purplish; anthers yellow. Female catkins 3-7 together behind shoot apices, c. 5mm long, glandular. Cone (1)-1.3-1.7-(2) cm long, ellipsoid; scales becoming horizontal after dehiscence and persistent on tree. Nutlet c. 3mm long, broadly ovoid; wing narrower than nut.

SIMILAR TAXA

No similar tree in that habitat.

DISTRIBUTION

Widespread, especially common in the Waikato and Wairarapa, where it can be a problem weed.

HABITAT

Riparian areas along rivers and lakes.

GENUS

Alnus

FAMILY

Betulaceae

AUTHORITY

Alnus glutinosa (L.) Gaertner

FLOWERING

Late winter to spring



Glenorchy wetlands. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



'Cone'. Whanganui. Aug 2011. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FRUITING

Summer

YEAR NATURALISED

1914

ORIGIN

Europe, Asian and North Africa.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental and timber tree also produces a yellow dye.

TOLERANCES

The plant prefers moist a situation and has been planted in colder areas (Webb et. al., 1988).

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Can be controlled mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. Wind and water dispersed seed, also forms thickets by suckering. Fruiting is prolific (Webb et. al., 1988).

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

alnus: From an old Latin name for alder

glutinosa: From the Greek gloeo 'glue', refers to the gummy leaves

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

ALNGLU

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. (1988). Flora of New Zealand Volume 4: Naturalised pteridophytes, gymnosperms, dicotyledons. Botany Division, DSIR, Christchurch.

[Wikipedia - *Alnus glutinosa*](#)

Popay et al (2010). An illustrated guide to common weeds of New Zealand, third edition. NZ Plant Protection Society Inc, 416pp.

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

ATTRIBUTION

Prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA). Features description and life cycle and dispersal and tolerances information from Webb et. al. (1988).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alnus-glutinosa/>

PDF DATE

06 June 2026