

Alternanthera denticulata

COMMON NAMES

lesser joyweed

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial herb. Stems prostrate to erect, somewhat lianoid, rooting at nodes, green flushed pink, glabrous to sparsely hairy, nodes tomentose. Leaves (20-)30-80 x 6-12 mm, narrowly elliptic or lanceolate, or linear to linear oblong, light green, yellow green or glaucous flushed pink, with midrib and lateral veins pink, glabrate, apex acute, margins distinctly denticulate. Spikes globular to shortly oblong 5-8 mm diam., clustered with 15-20 flowers. Flowers subtended by 1 bract and 2 bracteoles, these 1.5-2 x 0.6-0.8 mm, lanceolate, cream, glabrous, shortly acuminate to acute. Perianth segments 2.3-2.4 x 0.6-0.8 mm, lanceolate, cream, glabrous, shortly acuminate to acute, anthers 0.15 mm long, yellow, style 0.1-0.2 mm, stigma capitate. Fruit 1.7-1.8 x 1.9-2.1 mm, cream flushed pink, obovoid, indehiscent. Seeds 0.9-1 x 0.8-0.9 mm, cream to yellow, with a light brown centre, compressed.

SIMILAR TAXA

Closely related to *A. nahui* Heenan et de Lange. From which it differs by its more gracile growth habit and by the much broader, distinctly denticulate leaves. Hybrids between *A. denticulata* and *A. nahui* have been recorded.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. Common in Australia (where the species was described from). There is some uncertainty as to its exact status in New Zealand, and while most of the populations seen appear to be indigenous, it seems likely that at least some locations may represent independent naturalisations from Australia (see Heenan & de Lange, *N.Z.J.Bot.* 42: 739-745 (2004))

HABITAT

Coastal to lowland fertile wetlands, lake margins, river banks and around waterfalls, and in damp ground within forest, also a weed of drains, pig yards, and damp ground within urban areas

GENUS

Alternanthera

FAMILY

Amaranthaceae



Mangere Bridge, Auckland. Photographer: Mike Wilcox, Date taken: 01/04/2006, Licence: All rights reserved.



Lake Waiporohita, Karikari Peninsula. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 21/02/2011, Licence: CC BY.

AUTHORITY

Alternanthera denticulata R.Br.

SYNONYMS

Has been incorrectly referred to *Alternanthera sessilis* (L.) Roem. & Schult. by past New Zealand authors

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January - December

FRUITING

January - December

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Articles are dispersed by attaching to fur, feathers and clothing (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces, cuttings and seed but inclined to become very weedy.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available. Rather weedy and unattractive but the leaves are eaten as a vegetable by some ethnic groups.

ETYMOLOGY

alternanthera: From the Latin *alternus* 'alternate' and the Greek *anthera* 'anther', meaning alternating anther, probably in reference to the anthers being alternately fertile and barren.

denticulata: Finely toothed

NVS CODE

ALTDEN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 28

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP, SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Increasing | Qualifiers: DE, DPS, DPT, EF, INC, SO Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the

["Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland"](#) Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Heenan, P.B.; de Lange, P.J. 2004: *Alternanthera denticulata* (Amaranthaceae) in New Zealand: a new addition to the indigenous or naturalised flora? *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 42: 739-745.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

ATTRIBUTION

Description from Heenan and de Lange (2004).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Alternanthera denticulata* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alternanthera-denticulata/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alternanthera-denticulata/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026