

# Alternanthera nahui

## COMMON NAMES

nahui

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO?

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

A perennial prostrate herb, easily overlooked as a coastal or riparian weed species. The leaves are generally narrow green to green-pink and attached in bunches at the same point on the stem, stem is green-pink, branchlets are often at same point as the leaf attachment. Flowers are at point where leaves attach to stem, looking like small pompoms, cream to pale pink.

## FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial herbs with a slender tap root; stems prostrate to decumbent, 1.5–3.0 mm diameter, green and flushed pink, glabrous to sparsely hairy, with 2 decurrent lines of hairs, nodes tomentose. **Leaves** 15–45 × 3–8 mm, usually narrowly elliptic-oblong to linear-oblong, sometimes narrowly elliptic or lanceolate, dark green, midrib raised on abaxial surface, glabrate to sparsely hairy on margins, midrib, and both surfaces; apex acute; margins entire, obscurely or sparsely denticulate; base attenuate. **Spikes** axillary, globular or shortly oblong, 5–7 mm diameter, with 15–22 flowers, apical flowers often failing to develop; peduncle ± sessile or up to 1.0 mm long, rachis with a few pilose hairs; pedicels ± sessile or up to 1 mm long; flowers subtended by 1 bract and 2 bracteoles; bracts 0.8–1.1 × 0.6–0.7 mm, ovate, cream, glabrous, membranous, subacute to shortly acuminate; bracteoles 1.2–1.5 × 0.3–0.5 mm, lanceolate, cream, glabrous, membranous, shortly acuminate to acute. **Perianth** segments (tepals) 2.0–3.3 × 0.6–0.9 mm, lanceolate to ovate, keeled, cream, glabrous, membranous, apex shortly acuminate to acute; keel prominent on mature, dry tepals. Stamens 3; anthers 0.15–0.25 mm long, yellow; filaments 0.3–0.5 mm long, free part 0.2–0.35 mm long, c. 1/3 length of ovary, translucent; staminodes 3, 0.15–0.3 mm long, usually shorter than filaments. Style up to 0.1–0.15 mm long; stigma capitate; ovary 0.4–0.5 mm long, green, compressed, apex obcordate, base cuneate. **Fruit** indehiscent utricle, 1.7–2.2 × 1.9–2.4 mm, broadly obovoid, cream to pale green, and usually flushed pink, compressed, surface colliculate, apex obcordate, base cuneate. Seeds 0.8–1.0 mm long, broadly obovate to ± circular, cream to yellow, with a raised light brown or orange-brown centre, glabrous, smooth, compressed, apex rounded, base rounded.



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



Alternanthera sessilis, Rarotonga. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from *Alternanthera sessilis* (which is not present in New Zealand) by its much narrower leaves, distinctly keeled tepals, shorter staminodes, and shorter style, and from *A. denticulata* by its smaller stature and shorter and narrower leaves with less denticulate margins.

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand, Te Ika-a-Māui | North Island and Te Waipounamu | South Island. Also Norfolk Island and possibly Australia

## HABITAT

Predominantly a coastal to lowland species of seasonally to permanently wet habitats such as lagoon, lake, pond, river, and stream margins. It has also been recorded growing within the lag zone and around burn pools of oligotrophic peat bogs in Northland and Waikato, and from salt marshes. Also an urban weed in clogged gutters, drains and in damp lawns, verges and parkland.

## GENUS

*Alternanthera*

## FAMILY

Amaranthaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Alternanthera nahui* Heenan et de Lange

## SYNONYMS

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

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

True *A. sessilis* differs from *A. nahui* by its much wider elliptic to rhomboidal leaves (see image from Rarotonga). *Alternanthera sessilis* is widespread in tropical Australia, Indonesia, Malesian, southern China and the Pacific islands.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

January - December

## FRUITING

January - December

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed, rooted pieces and cuttings. However can be rather weedy and aggressive.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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

## 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.

## NVS CODE

ALTNAH

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 28

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO?

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help

Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland](#)" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

Northland: 2026 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon Help

Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau](#)" Ford et al. 2026 report.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Heenan, PB, de Lange, PJ, Keeling, J. (2009): *Alternanthera nahui*, a new species of Amaranthaceae indigenous to New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 47: 97-105.

## ATTRIBUTION

Description from: Heenan et al. (2009): *Alternanthera nahui*, a new species of Amaranthaceae indigenous to New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 47: 97-105.

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Alternanthera nahui* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alternanthera-nahui/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

01 September 2026