Asphodelus fistulosus

COMMON NAMES
asphodel

BIOSTATUS
Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS
Not applicable

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Monocots

FLOWER COLOURS
Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Short-lived perennial herb up to about 60 cm with fleshy-fibrous roots. Leaves are linear up to 25 cm by 4 mm, and densely tufted. White or pale pink flowers are held in racemes to about 20 cm, each petal has conspicuous green or purple mid-vein. Black seeds to about 3.5 mm are held in 5 x 5 mm capsules.

SIMILAR TAXA
There are several species of Asphodelus cultivated in New Zealand, but A. fistulosus is the only one known to be naturalised.

HABITAT
Terrestrial. Usually coastal areas.

GENUS
Asphodelus

FAMILY
Asphodelaceae

AUTHORITY
Asphodelus fistulosus L.

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
July, August, September

FRUITING
September, October, November, December

YEAR NATURALISED
1869

ORIGIN
Mediterranean

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
Ornamental

TOLERANCES
Tolerates very dry conditions in coastal areas

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Spreads from seeds and some vegetative spread.

ETYMOLOGY
asphodelus: Possibly derived from the Greek a- ‘without’ and sphallo ‘to supplant’, the beautiful flowers not easily surpassed.
fistulosus: From the Latin fistula ‘pipe’, referring to a cylindrical or terete shape which is closed at each end

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
ASPFIS

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/asphodelus-fistulosus/

PDF DATE
25 May 2026