

Bidens frondosa

COMMON NAMES

beggar's ticks

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites


SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Tall upright annual, up to 2 m tall, with deeply divided leaves, yellow button-like flowers and characteristic flat black seeds with two barbed teeth easily attaching to clothing and hair.

FLOWER COLOURS

Orange, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect, glabrous or almost glabrous annual, 20-200 cm tall. Stems angled, branched above to form infl., and sometimes from base. Lvs petiolate, 1-pinnate, with 1-2 pairs of leaflets and a slightly larger terminal leaflet; leaflets sessile or shortly petiolulate, narrow-ovate to lanceolate, coarsely or unevenly serrate, acuminate, (1)-2-13 cm long. Upper cauline lvs becoming smaller, shortly petiolate, and often simple and not lobed or 3-lobed. Capitula 10-20 mm diam. Outer involucral bracts 4-9, foliaceous, usually ciliate at least at base, sometimes glabrous, linear to narrowly oblong-obovate, (10)-15-30 mm long; inner bracts many, membranous, triangular to subulate, 6-10 mm long, with dark lined centre and pale margins. Receptacular scales similar to inner bracts but narrower. Florets usually all , tubular, yellow-orange, rarely a few orange ray florets present. Achenes flattened, ovate-cuneate with 1 slender rib on each face, dark brown, ciliate, and otherwise glabrous to sparsely hairy, 6-10 mm long; awns 2, 2.5-4.5 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Non-flowering plants are superficially similar to cannabis. Differs from the two other *Bidens* species by the two toothed seed (3 or more in *B. tripartita* and *B. pilosa*) also having larger flower heads.

DISTRIBUTION

Locally abundant in northern and eastern North island, scattered elsewhere in the North Island and northern South Island as far south as Westland and Christchurch.

HABITAT

Water body margins, swamps, damp waste places and low-lying areas.

GENUS

Bidens

FAMILY

Asteraceae



Capitulum showing involucral bracts. Trentham, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 16/03/2007, Licence: CC BY.



Young plant. Trentham, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 04/01/2007, Licence: CC BY.

AUTHORITY

Bidens frondosa L.

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November to April

FRUITING

Autumn

YEAR NATURALISED

1907

ORIGIN

North America

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Probably a seed or soil contaminant.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Can be controlled manually, mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Animal dispersed seed.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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

ETYMOLOGY

bidens: From the Latin bi- 'two' and dens 'teeth', the seed having two tooth-like projections

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

BIDFRO

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.

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 from Webb et al., (1998).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/bidens-frondosa/>

PDF DATE

08 June 2026