

Houttuynia cordata

COMMON NAME

houttuynia

FAMILY

Saururaceae

AUTHORITY

Houttuynia cordata Thunb.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

HABITAT

Terrestrial. Wetlands, gardens, freshwater margins, damp ground, forest, shrubland and fenland.

FEATURES

Dense, deciduous (semi-evergreen in warm areas) groundcover herb to 1m. Slender couch-like rhizomes. Stems creeping and semi-ascending. leaves heart-shaped, up to 7 cm long, usually variegated cream, bronze, scarlet and green, soon reverting to green. Peppery scent when crushed. Flowerhead a small spike with minute flowers and 4 white bracts (petals) at the base, Dec-Feb. Usually dies back to rootstock over winter.

SIMILAR TAXA

Ivy has similar leaves but woody stems. 3 coloured leaves (green, red, creamy) inmost commonly cultivated form. Leaves are unpleasant-smelling.

FLOWERING

December, January, February

FLOWER COLOURS

White

LIFE CYCLE

Reproduces by rhizome fragments or possibly seeds.

ORIGIN

Japan South to mountains of Nepal and Java.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental plant

ETYMOLOGY

houttuynia: Named for Dr Maarten Houttuyn (1720 – 1798), a Dutch botanist.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Johnson, A. T. and Smith, H. A (1986). Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning. Landsman Bookshop Ltd: Buckenhill, UK.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/houttuynia-cordata/>



Houttuynia cordata. Photographer: Richard Hursthouse



Houttuynia cordata. Photographer: ARC