

Iris foetidissima

COMMON NAME

stinking iris

FAMILY

Iridaceae

AUTHORITY

Iris foetidissima L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

NVS CODE

IRIFOE

HABITAT

Terrestrial. A plant of coastal and lowland habitats (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). A plant of low forest, scrub and forest margin communities, also found in waste places (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995).

FEATURES

Clump-forming perennial to 80 cm. Rhizomes red-brown, up to 15 mm diameter. Leaves leathery, dark green, broad, sword shaped, 15-25 mm x 60-100 cm, foul smelling when crushed. Flowering stem 60-80 cm, erect. Flowers up to 10 cm diameter, dull yellow with greenish-brown markings (Occasionally brownish-purple). Seed capsule green, 3-sided, 5 cm long, splitting issuing many scarlet round seeds, 5 mm diameter.

SIMILAR TAXA

The leaves have an unpleasant odour when crushed and this is useful in separating *I. foetidissima* from other *Iris* species. It can also be recognised by the drab flowers and conspicuous scarlet seeds exposed in the persistent capsule.

FLOWERING

November, December

FLOWER COLOURS

Brown, Yellow

LIFE CYCLE

Perennial, reproduces by seed and vegetatively through rhizomatous resprouting (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). Seed is dispersed by birds and water (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995).

YEAR NATURALISED

1945

ORIGIN

Europe & N Afr

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental

TOLERANCES

The plant prefers high rainfall and is highly tolerant of shade (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). After grazing the plant resprouts from the rhizome (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). Requires medium soil fertility (Atkinson 1997).



Iris foetidissima. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Iris foetidissima. Photographer: Richard Hursthouse

ETYMOLOGY

iris: From the Greek iris 'rainbow', presumably in reference to the many colours of the flowers (Johnson and Smith, 1986).

foetidissima: Vile smelling

POISONOUS PLANT

The orange seed (which can be seen when the fruits open) are poisonous.

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/iris-foetidissima/>