Libertia ixioides

COMMON NAMES
mikoikoi, NZ iris

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Monocots

FLOWER COLOURS
White, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Plants consisting of leafy fans, close together on short, much branched rhizomes, joined by short stolons. Leaves 150–1160 × 3–12 mm, the two surfaces similar; inclined to turn yellow where exposed to full sun; leaf bases pale red-green; nerves many, median ones crowded to form pale midrib; margins often finely scabrid, leaf in transverse section convex lens-shaped, two rows of vascular bundles present, marginal vascular bundle present, sclerenchyma present on inside of leaf sheath. Peduncles long (2/3 length of the inflorescence), but inflorescence short, usually not carrying flowers or fruits above leaves. Panicle narrow, but much branched, or sometimes simply branched; lower bracts long (50–410 mm), green, lanceolate, upper bracts narrow and pale brown, occurring singly; 1–6 flowers (often 2) per branch. Pedicels stout, 10–28 mm long, glabrous. Flower bud sometimes yellowish, usually much smaller than ovary, flowers 8–25 mm diameter; tepals all white internally, widely patent; outer tepals about ½ length of inner tepals and narrower, elliptical, flattened, with apiculus; inner tepals orbicular-elliptical, shortly unguiculate, not usually covering outer tepals, slight cleft at tips. Staminal filaments very shortly connate; anthers c.2 mm long, yellow. Ovary pale, larger than perianth bud; style branches sometimes slightly winged, usually pointing outwards. Capsule 7–25 mm long, 5–14 mm diameter, barrel-shaped, ripening from green to yellow to black, partially dehiscing by short loculicidal splitting; old valves pale and not widely patent. Seeds 1.0–2.0 × 1.0–1.5 mm, rounded or occasionally angular, reticulate-foveolate, bright tangerine orange.

SIMILAR TAXA
The large ovaries (when compared with perianth bud size at anthesis) and large partially dehiscing capsules which dry to a pale tan colour (rather than black) separates this species from all other New Zealand Libertia. Libertia ixioides differs from L. grandiflora and L. mooreae by its shorter inflorescences, large sepals, and oblong petals, and yellow leaf colour in summer. It differs from L. peregrinans through the lack of raised coloured mid-veins on the leaves, and from L. peregrinans, L. edgariae, L. cranwelliae, and L. ixioides × L. peregrinans by the short rather than long rhizomes. It differs from L. micrantha by its taller stature, rhizome type, and larger flowers

Adaxial leaf surface, Whanganui. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 24/10/2015, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Mount Tamahunga. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 14/10/2009, Licence: CC BY.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North, South and Stewart Islands.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane. Often locally common on ridges, cliffs, gullies, river banks, coastal cliffs, and upland forest. It has been recorded as epiphytic in some northern sites.

GENUS
Libertia

FAMILY
Iridaceae

AUTHORITY
Libertia ixioides (Forst.f.) Spreng.

SYNONYMS
Sisyrinchium ixioides Forst.f., Libertia tricolor Lem.; Moraea ixioides (G.Forst.) Thunb.; Ferraria ixioides (G.Forst.) Willd.; Nematostigma ixioides (G.Forst.) A.Dietr.; Renealmia ixioides (G.Forst.) Ker Gawl.; Tekelia ixioides (G.Forst.) Kuntze

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September – December

FRUITING
January - December

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Seeds are possibly dispersed by wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and by the division of established plants. Very forgiving and tolerant of a wide range of situations. Next to Libertia peregrinans, L. ixioides is the most widely cultivated of the New Zealand Libertia. Forms with highly coloured foliage are now especially popular.

ETYMOLOGY
libertia: Named after Marie-Anne Libert, (1782-1865) born & died in Malmedy, province of Liège, Belgium; botanist and mycologist
ixioides: Like an ixia

NVS CODE
LIBIXI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 228

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
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

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Blanchon, D.J.; Murray, B.G.; Braggins, J.E. 2002: A taxonomic revision of Libertia (Iridaceae) in New Zealand. New Zealand Journal of Botany 40: 437–456.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11: 285-309

ATTRIBUTION

Description modified from Blanchon et al. (2002)

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/libertia-ixioides/

PDF DATE

08 July 2026