Libertia peregrinans

COMMON NAME
New Zealand iris, mikoikoi

SYNONYMS
Libertia peregrinans agg.

FAMILY
Iridaceae

AUTHORITY
Libertia peregrinans Cockayne et Allan

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Monocots

NVS CODE
LIBPER

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 114

Puponga Farm Park, NW Nelson Coast.
Photographer: Simon Walls

Libertia. Photographer: Jim Campbell

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2009 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP
2004 | Gradual Decline

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North (from Piha (now historic) to Wellington), South (throughout), Stewart and Chatham Islands.

HABITAT
A primarily coastal or lowland species of sandy, peaty or pumiceous soils. It may be found growing in dune slacks and swales, on the margins of swamps, in open poorly draining ground under scrub, and on the Chatham Islands within Sporadanthus-dominated bogs. A distinctive upland form is known from the leaf litter within mainly beech forests, and what appears to have been this species once grew inland near Waiouru, on the Central Volcanic Plateau.

FEATURES
Plants consisting of leafy fans crowded or emerging at intervals from far-spreading horizontal stolons, c. 3 mm diameter, yellow in colour. Leaves 130–700 × 3–9 mm, the two surfaces similar; often ± copper coloured where exposed to full sun; nerves many, the median ones crowded and coloured red or orange; margins usually not scabrid; leaf in transverse section convex lens-shaped, two rows of vascular bundles present centrally, marginal vascular bundles present, sclerenchyma present on inside of leaf sheath. Peduncles short, inflorescences usually not carrying flowers or fruits above leaves. Panicle narrow, but usually closely branched, lower bracts long (40–170 mm), lanceolate, often brown, upper bracts shorter and brown, occurring singly; 1–7 flowers per branch. Pedicels stout, c.14–40 mm long, glabrous. In flower bud, perianth often brownish externally, similar size or slightly larger than ovary. Flowers 10–30 mm diameter; tepals all white internally, widely patent; outer tepals usually > ½ the length of the inner, narrower, oblong-elliptic or oblong, flattened, without apiculus; inner tepals obovate-elliptical, shortly unguiculate, usually leaving most of outer tepals visible, cleft present at tip. Staminal filaments very shortly connate; anthers c.3.0–3.5 mm long, dark yellow-brown. Ovary cupiform, green; style branches narrowly winged, pointing outwards. Capsule 6–15 mm long, 4–10 mm diameter, ovoid-barrel-shaped, ripening from green to orange, yellow, or black on maturity, often indehiscent for a year after ripening, seeds released after capsule disintegrates. Seeds c.1.0–1.5 mm diameter, subglobose, surface texture reticulate-foveolate, orange or orange-brown.

SIMILAR TAXA
Libertia peregrinans differs from L. grandiflora, L. ixioides, L. mooreae, and L. micrantha by its elongate rhizomes. It also differs from L. grandiflora and L. mooreae by its short inflorescences, oblong petals, large sepals, and indehiscent capsules. It differs from L. ixioides by its smaller, indehiscent capsules and red or orange raised leaf veins, and from L. micrantha by its taller size, leaf anatomy, and flower form. Libertia edgariae and L. cranwelliae also have elongate rhizomes, but L. edgariae has longer inflorescences, orbicular petals, small sepals, and green or yellow leaf veins, while L. cranwelliae has larger capsules which turn orange on ripening, and leaves that are straight and turn yellow in summer.

FLOWERING
October - January

FLOWER COLOURS
White, Yellow

FRUITING
January - February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Very easy from the division of whole plants. Can be grown from fresh seed which usually germinates quickly. An attractive and commonly cultivated species, popular because of its stunning dark orange foliage.

THREATS
Formerly widespread this species has now declined or gone extinct from large parts of its former range and it is now only moderately common in some parts of the western and southern South Island, and on Stewart and Chatham Islands. Its decline can be attributed to widespread habitat loss through coastal development and weed encroachment, cattle, sheep, horse and rabbit browse. Several sites, including the type locality were destroyed by their use as rubbish dumps. Inland populations on the Central Volcanic plateau seem to have been lost through a combination of over collecting and competition from weeds.

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

ATTRIBUTION
Description modified from Blanchon et al. (2002)

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.

MORE INFORMATION

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