Linum catharticum

COMMON NAMES
purging flax

BIOSTATUS
Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS
Not applicable

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Slender, delicate herb, with narrow paired leaves, up to 1 cm long, well separated up the thin stems, with an open branched flowerhead with small (1 cm across) white flowers.

FLOWER COLOURS
White, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Slender biennial herb up to 30-(35) cm high. Stems glabrous, simple to much-branched at base. Stem lvs always opposite, glabrous, oblong to narrowly elliptic-obovate, usually obovate at base of stem, obtuse to acute, 1-veined, entire, (3)-5-12-(15) mm long; lvs subtending infl.-branches single or paired, similar to stem lvs but shorter, narrower and sometimes acuminate. Infl. of few to numerous fls in a diffuse compound dichasium; sepals elliptic, acuminate, glandular, ciliate, 2-3 mm long, slightly < or ± = to capsule; petals white, about 2× as long as sepals, 3.5-5 mm long; styles free to base. Capsule glabrous, globose, dehiscent, 2-3 mm diam.; seeds boat-shaped, shiny light brown, c. 1 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA
No other Linum in New Zealand is as delicate or has opposite leaves.

DISTRIBUTION
Locally common throughout.

HABITAT
Wet grassland, dunes, margins of waterbodies, often in areas that are seasonally dry.

GENUS
Linum

FAMILY
Linaceae

AUTHORITY
Linum catharticum L.

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October to April

FRUITING
Summer and autumn

YEAR NATURALISED
1896

ORIGIN
Europe, western Asia and North Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
Unknown, seed or soil contaminant.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES
Not controlled in New Zealand.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Seed dispersed by water or contaminated machinery.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FAC: Facultative
Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
linum: Flax

NVS CODE
LINCAT

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.
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., (1988).

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/linum-catharticum/

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