

# Linum catharticum

## COMMON NAME

purging flax

## FAMILY

Linaceae

## AUTHORITY

Linum catharticum L.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## NVS CODE

LINCAT

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## BRIEF 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.

## DISTRIBUTION

Locally common throughout.

## HABITAT

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

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

## FEATURES

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  $\pm$  = to capsule; petals white, about 2 $\times$  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.

## FLOWERING

October to April

## FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

## FRUITING

Summer and autumn

## LIFE CYCLE

Seed dispersed by water or contaminated machinery.



## 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.

## ETYMOLOGY

**linum**: Flax

## ATTRIBUTION

Prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA). Features description from Webb et al., (1988).

## 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.

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/linum-catharticum/>