

Lycopus europaeus

COMMON NAMES

Gypsywort

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Mint-like plant, up to 1 m tall, with square stems, toothed paired leaves and tiny white or pale mauve flowers produced in groups above each pair of leaves in the upper stem, but no minty smell when crushed.

FLOWER COLOURS

Purple, Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial herb. Stem hairy, to c. 1 m tall. Lvs shortly petiolate or sessile. Lamina 3-8.5 × 1-3 cm, ovate-lanceolate to elliptic, deeply crenate-serrate, hairy at first, becoming glabrous or nearly so; basal area with narrow-oblong or linear-oblong lobes extending to midrib; apex ± acuminate. Upper lvs and bracts smaller, without basal lobes, hairy, especially on veins below. Calyx c. 3 mm long, hairy; teeth > tube, lanceolate-acuminate. Corolla 3.5-4 mm long, white with purple spots on lower lip and in throat. Nutlets 1.2-1.3 mm long, broad-obovoid, glandular and swollen on anterior face, with margin clearly delimited.

SIMILAR TAXA

Superficially similar to mints (*Mentha* spp.) but lacking the characteristic smell of those plants.

DISTRIBUTION

Abundant in the Waikato and Rotorua Lakes, few sites in Northland, Auckland and in Westland near Haast.

HABITAT

Lake and river margins, drains and swamps, often growing at the base of raupo and tall sedges.

GENUS

Lycopus

FAMILY

Lamiaceae

AUTHORITY

Lycopus europaeus L.

ENDEMIC FAMILY

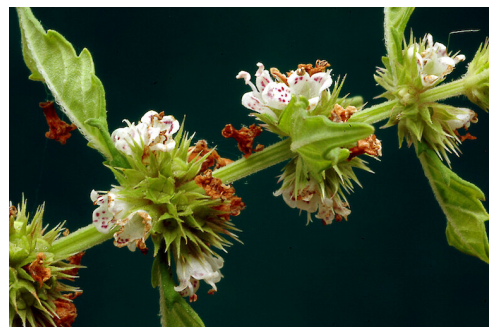
No

FLOWERING

Summer and autumn



Whanganui. Mar 2013. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Inflorescences. Whanganui. Feb 2013. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FRUITING

Summer and autumn

YEAR NATURALISED

1940

ORIGIN

Europe, cold temperate Asia

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Possibly as a herbal plant

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Rarely controlled, but can be controlled manually, mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Seed dispersed by water, footwear or contaminated machinery.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

LYCEUR

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.

Champion et al (2012). Freshwater Pests of New Zealand. NIWA publication.

<http://www.niwa.co.nz/freshwater-and-estuaries/management-tools/identification-guides-and-fact-sheets/freshwater-pest-species>

ATTRIBUTION

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lycopus-europaeus/>

PDF DATE

08 June 2026