

# Melianthus major

## COMMON NAMES

Cape honey flower

## BIOSTATUS

Exotic

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## FLOWER COLOURS

Brown, Red/Pink

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub to approx. 2m high with stout, soft-wooded hollow stems and suckering root system. Leaves to 50cm long, glaucous below. Stipules fused and sheathing, 7~15cm long, ovate, cuspidate. Rachis winged. Leaflets 11~21, sessile, 8~15 x 3.5~7.5cm, gradually tapering towards apex, usu. folded, regularly and deeply serrate with teeth about 1cm long; basal pair smaller. Racemes dense, to around 40cm long, puberulent. Pedicels 1~2.5cm long, dark red, with short glandular hairs. Bracts ovate or narrow-ovate, to 4cm long, reddish-brown, short-acuminate. Flowers foetid, dark reddish-brown. Anterior calyx segment much < others, gibbous, with short glandular hairs. Posterior calyx segments 2~3cm long, ovate, with short glandular hairs. Petals much < calyx. Stamens around 2cm long. Style 1.5~2cm long. Capsule 2.5~5cm long, papery, acutely angled. Seeds 5~6mm long, broad-ellipsoid, keeled, shining black. (- Webb et. al., 1988)

## SIMILAR TAXA

Shrub to 2m with stout, soft-wooded, hollow stems and a suckering root system; leaves 50cm long, underside blue/green; leaflets 11-21 with no stems, 8-15 x 3.5-7.5 cm, gradually tapering, regularly and deeply serrate with teeth about 1cm long; flowers dark, reddish brown and strong smelling; seeds 5-6mm, shining black (Webb et al., 1988).

## HABITAT

Terrestrial.

## GENUS

Melianthus

## FAMILY

Melianthaceae

## AUTHORITY

Melianthus major L.

## FLOWERING

July, August, September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April

## YEAR NATURALISED

1878



Coastal Southland, likely dumped from garden waste. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 04/11/2024, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Flower detail, coastal Southland, likely dumped from garden waste. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 04/11/2024, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## ORIGIN

S Africa

## REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial.

## ETYMOLOGY

**major**: Greater

## 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

MELMAJ

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/melianthus-major/>

## PDF DATE

25 May 2026