

Nasturtium officinale

COMMON NAMES

Watercress

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

A bright green, robust, creeping or upright herb that has small white flowers in spring through summer, and is found along the margins of slow flowing shallow waters.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial stoloniferous herb. Stems trailing, glabrous, to several m long. Leaves glabrous, all similar, but becoming smaller near inflorescence. Pinnate, petiolate, 2-10-(25) x 1-5 cm; basal auricles small; leaflets rounded, ovate; margins entire or sinuate. Pedicels glabrous, slender, erecto-patent, spreading to deflexed at fruiting, (5)-10-15-(18) mm long (very rarely to 30 mm). Sepals 1.5-2.5 x 0.7-1.5 mm. Petals white, (3)-4-6 x (1)-1.5-2.5 mm. Silique glabrous, narrow-oblong, curved, (8)-12-15-(18) x 2-2.5 mm; valves with distinct midrib, at least below; style c. 1 mm long. Seeds distinctly in 2 rows per locule, brown, c. 1mm long, coarsely reticulate with 20-50 polygonal depressions per face.

SIMILAR TAXA

Very similar to *N. microphyllum*, but differs in its seed surface and also tends to have smaller flowers, shorter pedicels and broader siliques.

DISTRIBUTION

Common throughout New Zealand.

HABITAT

Aquatic: Emergent. Marginal aquatic plant, can grow in water up to 6m in depth (Waikoropupu springs)

GENUS

Nasturtium

FAMILY

Brassicaceae

AUTHORITY

Nasturtium officinale R.Br.

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

August - May



Rimutaka Rail Trail. Dec 2006. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Licence: CC BY.



Silique opened to reveal two rows of seeds. Whanganui. Feb 2013. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FRUITING

(August)-November-February-(May)

YEAR NATURALISED

1852

ORIGIN

Eurasia, Northern Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Culinary herb (Healy 1962)

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial, reproduces by stem fragmentation and see

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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

ETYMOLOGY

officinale: From the Latin officina shortened from opificina which originally meant 'workshop' but later came to mean a monastic storeroom, herb-room or pharmacy. Refers to the plant's medicinal value.

NVS CODE

NASOFF

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Popay et al (2010). An illustrated guide to common weeds of New Zealand, third edition. NZ Plant Protection Society Inc, 416pp.

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Healy, A.J. (1998). Some consequences of the introduction of watercress by the French at Akaroa. Canterbury Botanical Society 33: 9-10.

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. 1365 pp.

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA). Features description from Webb et al., (1988). Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/nasturtium-officinale/>

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