

Nymphaea alba

COMMON NAME

common water lily

FAMILY

Nymphaeaceae

AUTHORITY

Nymphaea alba L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Floating leaved aquatic plant with 'lily' shaped leaves and usually with white flowers (can be pale pink and hybrids may be red, yellow or bluish), that can develop dense stands in still and slow flowing waters.

DISTRIBUTION

Widely naturalised, first record 1950, but widely cultivated and planted before that time.

HABITAT

Still and slow flowing water bodies, usually found growing in ornamental pools. It is normally found growing up to 2 m depth in muddy substrates.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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

FEATURES

Stout horizontal rhizome up to 60 mm across. Leaves are almost round to elliptical in shape, with a deep sinus. Leaves are up to 25 cm across, green or pink on the lower surface, with a distinct main vein. Flowers are either white or pale pink (hybrids can have red, yellow, or blue flowers) and are up to 20 cm across.

SIMILAR TAXA

Mexican water lily (*Nymphaea mexicana*), marshwort (*Nymphoides geminata*), and fringed water lily (*Nymphoides peltata*). Mexican water lily has an erect rhizome distinguishing it from common water lily, which has a horizontal rhizome. Mexican water lily also often has brown blotches on the upper surface of leaves, which don't occur on the leaves of common water lily. Marshwort and fringed water lily have thin stolons which loop across the sediment surface or lie just beneath the water surface, whereas common water lily has thick rhizomes.

FLOWERING

November, December, January, February, March

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

LIFE CYCLE

Rhizome extension and fragmentation, rarely by seed. Deliberate plantings



Nymphaea alba. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Flower of *Nymphaea alba*. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

YEAR NATURALISED

1950

ORIGIN

Native to Northern temperate regions

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental pond plant

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA). Habitat information from Coffey and Clayton (1988).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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>.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/nymphaea-alba/>