

Nymphaea mexicana

COMMON NAMES

Mexican water lily

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Floating leaved aquatic plant with 'lily' shaped leaves and yellow flowers, that can develop dense stands in still and slow flowing waters.

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout erect rhizome with creeping stolons, often ending with distinctive 'brood-bodies' which look like miniature hands of bananas. Leaves are almost round to elliptical in shape, with a deep narrow basal sinus. Leaves are up to 20 cm across, green or pink on the lower surface, and with brown blotches on the upper surface. Flower is yellow and up to 15 cm across. Seeds 2-3 mm long. New Zealand plants are likely to be of hybrid origin, but have the characters of the parent species.

SIMILAR TAXA

Common water lily (*Nymphaea alba*), marshwort (*Nymphoides geminata*), and fringed water lily (*Nymphoides peltata*). Common water lily has a horizontal rhizome distinguishing it from Mexican water lily, which has an erect rhizome and 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 water lilies have thick rhizomes.

DISTRIBUTION

Locally naturalised, mostly Auckland and Waikato.

HABITAT

Still and slow flowing water bodies

GENUS

Nymphaea

FAMILY

Nymphaeaceae

AUTHORITY

Nymphaea mexicana Zucc.

FLOWERING

October, November, December



Flower of *Nymphaea mexicana*. Photographer: Rohan Wells, Date taken: 17/07/2009, Licence: All rights reserved.



Stolons of *Nymphaea mexicana*. Photographer: Rohan Wells, Date taken: 06/03/2009, Licence: All rights reserved.

FRUITING

Summer-autumn

YEAR NATURALISED

1982

ORIGIN

Native to Southern United States and Mexico.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental pond plant

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Reproduces by rhizomes, tubers, and seed. Dispersed by water movement and deliberate plantings.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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

NATIONAL PEST PLANT ACCORD SPECIES

This plant is listed in the 2020 National Pest Plant Accord. The National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) is an agreement to prevent the sale and/or distribution of specified pest plants where either formal or casual horticultural trade is the most significant way of spreading the plant in New Zealand. For up to date information and an electronic copy of the 2020 Pest Plant Accord manual (including plant information and images) visit the [MPI website](#).

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](#).

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>.

Johnson PN, Brooke PA (1989). Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington. 319pp.

DiTomaso JM, EA Healy (2003). Aquatic and riparian weeds of the west. University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Publication 3421, 462pp.

Hofstra, D.E.; Champion, P.D.; Dugdale, T.M.; Fridman, M.; Baker, R; Finlay 2013 Journal of Aquatic Plant Management (accepted for publication).

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA).

MORE INFORMATION

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

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