Ottelia ovalifolia

COMMON NAMES
Swamp lily

BIOSTATUS
Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS
Not applicable

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Monocots

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Bottom rooted aquatic perennial plant with different submerged leaves (strap like) on juvenile plants and floating leaves on mature plants. Floating leaves are typically green with dark green veins. The distinct flowers have only three white petals with a dark red/purple base and orange stamens.

Flower of Ottelia ovalifolia. Photographer: Rohan Wells, Date taken: 10/04/2008, Licence: All rights reserved.

FLOWER COLOURS
Orange, White

Ottelia ovalifolia leaves. Photographer: Rohan Wells, Date taken: 10/04/2008, Licence: All rights reserved.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
This bottom rooted plant has basal leaves; the submerged leaves are strap like, and those that float on the water surface have a long petiole. The floating leaves lie flat on the water surface and are oval to football shaped, 2 to 16 cm long, with 5 to 7 longitudinal nerves veins that are more prominent on the lower surface than on the upper. These veins are normally darker green than the remainder of the leaf. The flowers occur on stout peduncles and are of two kinds, those which remain unopened and submerged on short peduncles and those that are conspicuous and emergent. The latter flowers are large (c. 5cm across) and emergent on peduncles up to 38 cm long, each flower has 3 sepals with 3 alternate petals. The petals are white (to cream) with a dark red/purple base, rounded and creased lengthwise (a little like crepe paper). The anthers are yellow/orange and conspicuous. Flower stalks bend downwards into the water when fertilised. The fruit remains attached to the plant as the seed ripens. The fruit wall eventually disintegrates to release the seed, which is narrow/oval 2.5 to 3 mm long and has numerous fine appressed hairs.

SIMILAR TAXA
The strap like leaves of young plants may be mistaken for Vallisneria australis or Sagittaria spp., and the surface floating leaves for Cape pondweed (Aponogeton distachyos) or the native red pondweed (Potamogeton cheesemanii). Both vallisneria and sagittaria are stoloniferous. Vallisneria flowers are not 3-petalled. Sagittaria does have 3-petalled white flowers, but do not have floating leaves. Capre pondweed has narrower, longer leaves and neither this or red pondweed have dark green veins and a lighter coloured leaf, or 3-petalled white flowers.

DISTRIBUTION
Locally common in the North Island but also in northern South Island.

HABITAT
It may occur in slow moving water and on the margins and shallow water of large lakes, but is more commonly found in fertile farm ponds and small lakes.

GENUS
Ottelia

FAMILY
Hydrocharitaceae

AUTHORITY
Ottelia ovalifolia (R. Br.) L.C. Rich

FLOWERING
December - March

FRUITING
Summer-autumn

YEAR NATURALISED
1899

ORIGIN
Australia

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
Unknown, possibly introduced from Australia by waterfowl or via contaminated drainage machinery.

TOLERANCES
Tolerant of hot-cool temperatures

CONTROL TECHNIQUES
Not controlled in New Zealand.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Perennial. Reproduces from seed, no tubers, rhizomes or runners. Water fowl feed on fruit and disperse seed and also seeds may be dispersed by water movement.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
OBL: Obligate Wetland
Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

NVS CODE
OTTOVA

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Johnson PN, Brooke PA (1989). Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington. 319pp.
Aston, H (1977). Aquatic plants of Australia. Melbourne University Press, 367pp.
Coffey BT, Clayton JS (1988). New Zealand water plants: a guide to plants found in New Zealand freshwaters. Ruakura Agricultural Cente. 65pp

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

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ottelia-ovalifolia/

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