

Phytolacca octandra

COMMON NAMES

inkweed

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Glabrous, spreading or mainly erect subshrub to approx. 2m tall, with numerous white raphides on stems and lower surface of leaves. Stems softly woody towards base, often reddish. Petioles to 2.5cm long, moderately thick, often reddish. Lamina 4~15 x 1.5~5cm, elliptic or elliptic-ovate; base cuneate to attenuate; apex acute or mucronate. Racemes erect to approx. 7cm at flowering, to 11cm at fruiting; peduncles and very short pedicels mostly granular, becoming crimson at fruiting. Hermaphrodite flowers dense. Bracts 3~4mm long, linear-lanceolate to subulate; bracteoles much smaller. Perianth 5~7mm diam.; tepals accrescent, 2~3mm long, broad-ovate, imbricate, whitish or pale greenish at first, becoming pink to crimson at fruiting. Stamens 8, slightly < perianth; anthers white. Ovary 8-carpellate, green with numerous white raphides. Fruit about 8mm diam. when fresh, depressed globose, with 8 very shining black, very succulent with dark red juice. Seed 2~2.5mm diam., subglobose, glossy black. (-Webb et. al., 1988)

SIMILAR TAXA

The plant is a perennial soft-wooded shrub forming round bushes 1.2 - 1.8 metres tall (Hilgendorf 1926). The branches are brittle and the leaves are 8 - 10 cm long (Hilgendorf 1926). The flowers are small and green and inconspicuous (Hilgendorf 1926). The flowers are arranged on upright tapering spikes 12 - 15 cm long (Hilgendorf 1926). The berries are deep purple in colour (almost black) (Hilgendorf 1926). The berries are filled with a rich purple juice (Hilgendorf 1926).

HABITAT

Terrestrial.

GENUS

Phytolacca

FAMILY

Phytolaccaceae

AUTHORITY

Phytolacca octandra L.

FLOWERING

November, December, January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August



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YEAR NATURALISED

1867

ORIGIN

trop C&S America

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. The seed is eaten by birds (Hilgendorf 1926; Department of Conservation 1996) and doubtless distributed by them. Silver eyes, pheasants and turkeys are fond of the fruit and cattle and sheep eat the berries (Hilgendorf 1926).

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

POISONOUS PLANT

All parts of this plant are poisonous especially the spikes on the black berries.

NVS CODE

PHYOCT

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/phytolacca-octandra/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026