

# Pistia stratiotes

## COMMON NAMES

water lettuce

## BIOSTATUS

Exotic

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Free-floating aquatic plant, with thick pale green rounded leaves that form a rosette (lettuce like).

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Free floating perennial herb. Plants are stoloniferous with daughter plants often attached. Leaves are velvety hairy, pale yellow-green, often with a spongy thickened base. Roots are long and finely divided. Flowers are small (about 1 cm long) and inconspicuous, arranged as a spike enclosed by a hairy green bract.

## SIMILAR TAXA

None.

## DISTRIBUTION

Nationally eradicated, previously known from Tauranga and Hokianga, Northland.

## HABITAT

Still and slow-flowing water bodies in warm areas.

## GENUS

*Pistia*

## FAMILY

Araceae

## AUTHORITY

*Pistia stratiotes* L.

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

Late summer

## FRUITING

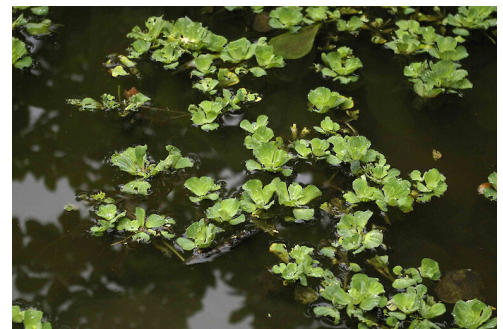
Not seen in New Zealand

## YEAR NATURALISED

1975



*Pistia stratiotes*. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



*Pistia stratiotes*. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## ORIGIN

Throughout the tropics.

## REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental pond and aquarium plant.

## CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Notify Ministry for Primary Industries if found.

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Older stolons between individual plants decay to release young plants. Also spreads by seed overseas.

## 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](#).

## 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>.

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

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

Connor, H. E.; Dawson, M. I.; Keating, R. D.; Gill L. S. (1996).

## ATTRIBUTION

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

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pistia-stratiotes/>

## PDF DATE

08 June 2026