Potamogeton cheesemanii

COMMON NAMES
red pondweed

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Monocots

FLOWER COLOURS
Cream, Red/Pink

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Aquatic, submerged or floating, rhizomatous sparsely branched perennial herb. Rhizomes rooting at nodes and producing mostly simple leafy branches; these ultimately water surface. Stipules membranous, free, open. Leaves dimorphic. Submersed leaves usually rather distant, usually shortly petiolate; lamina c. 40–100 × 5–15 mm, narrowly elliptic, entire, subacute, delicate, ± translucent, longitudinal nerves c. 5–11, irregularly joined by cross veins. Floating leaves often long-petiolate; lamina 20–40 × 10–25 mm, broad oblong-oval, entire, usually quite obtuse, firm and opaque, longitudinal nerves 10–15, laterals emerging from petiole rather than from midrib. Inflorescence a densely flowered spike, 10-25 mm long. Peduncles in axils of floating leaves, stout, erect, usually projecting above surface of water at flower, submersed in fruit. Achene c.2.5 × 1.5 mm, green, green-brown or brown, moderately flattened with rather strongly 3-ridged keel and short straight beak.

Borland Burn, Fiordland National Park. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 31/12/2020, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Potamogeton cheesemanii. Photographer: Lisa Forester, Licence: CC BY-SA.

SIMILAR TAXA
Distinguished from Potamogeton suboblongus by the strongly dimorphic foliage (i.e. clear distinction between submerged and emergent leaves), by the narrowly elliptic, ± translucent submerged leaves; floating leaves which are mostly broad-oval, with obtuse apices, and which have usually 6 or less (rarely an unequal higher number) nerves on either side of midrib; and by the green, green-brown or brown, flattened achenes which are 3-keeled when dry. In its submerged state Potamogeton cheesemanii could be confused with P. ochreatus from which it differs by non-fibrous stipules, and submerged and emergent elliptic to broadly oval leaves with well separated rather than closely set longitudinal nerves.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. New Zealand: North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands. Also Australia.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane - but mostly found in coastal and lowland areas. A common plant of ponds, lake margins and slowly flowing streams. Also colonising roadside ditches. rarely found in muddy hollows within forest.

GENUS
Potamogeton

FAMILY
Potamogetonaceae

AUTHORITY
Potamogeton cheesemanii A.Benn.

SYNONYMS
None

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
November - March

FRUITING
December - March

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from rooted pieces and fresh seed, An attractive plant for a large pond or similar water body but inclined to become aggressive in fertile waters.

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

ETYMOLOGY
potamogeton: River dweller
cheesemanii: Named after Thomas Frederick Cheeseman (1846 - 15 October 1923) who was a New Zealand botanist and naturalist who, in 1906, produced The Manual of the New Zealand Flora.

NVS CODE
POTCHE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 28

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (16 February 2012). Description adapted from Moore & Edgar (1970)

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/potamogeton-cheesemanii/

PDF DATE

08 June 2026