

# Ranunculus flammula

## COMMON NAMES

spearwort

## BIOSTATUS

Exotic

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

*R. flammula* is a perennial herb with bright yellow, butter-cup like flowers. The leaves are linear to lance-shaped, upright and not divided.

## FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A fleshy perennial herb with small pale yellow flowers (10 to 15 mm in diameter). Stems are slender, creeping or upright to 50 cm or more long. The leaves at the base of the stems are up to 8 cm long, and occur on stems up to 10 cm long. The stem leaves are comparatively smaller, lanceolate, entire or finely toothed.

## SIMILAR TAXA

No other buttercup (*Ranunculus*) has an undivided lanceolate leaf.

## DISTRIBUTION

Throughout most of the North and South Island.

## HABITAT

Wet sites such as drains, ditches, ponds and swamps.

## GENUS

*Ranunculus*

## FAMILY

Ranunculaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Ranunculus flammula* L.

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October to March

## FRUITING

Autumn



*Ranunculus flammula*. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



*Ranunculus flammula*. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

## YEAR NATURALISED

1907

## ORIGIN

Europe, Caucasus, Northwest Africa

## REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Unknown, possibly a seed contaminant or ornamental pond plant

## CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Not usually controlled in New Zealand, but may be controlled manually, mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation.

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Water fowl feed on fruit and disperse seed and also seeds may be dispersed by water movement.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

## ETYMOLOGY

**ranunculus:** From the Latin 'rana' frog, meaning little frog and probably refers to the plants typical marshy habit where frogs abound

## NVS CODE

RANFLA

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Popay et al (2010). An illustrated guide to common weeds of New Zealand, third edition. NZ Plant Protection Society Inc, 416pp.

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

Coffey BT, Clayton JS (1988). New Zealand water plants: a guide to plants found in New Zealand freshwaters. Ruakura Agricultural Centre. 65pp

## ATTRIBUTION

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

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ranunculus-flammula/>

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026