

Ranunculus sceleratus

COMMON NAME

Celery-leaved buttercup

FAMILY

Ranunculaceae

AUTHORITY

Ranunculus sceleratus L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Herbs other than Composites

NVS CODE

RANSCE

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not assessed

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Fleshy, shiny-leaved buttercup, superficially looking like a young celery plant, but with small (0.5 to 1 cm diameter) 5-petalled pale yellow flowers and a cylindrical green fruit on a many branched flowerhead on the top of upright leafy stem (up to 60 cm tall).

DISTRIBUTION

Scattered throughout both islands.

HABITAT

Grows in wet places such as in ditches, along streams and around ponds and lakes (Landcare Research 1999).

FEATURES

Annual; roots all fibrous. Stems stout, erect, glabrous or with sparse appressed hairs, (0.10-)0.30-0.60(-0.75) m tall. Basal and lower cauline lvs broadly ovate to reniform, cordate, deeply 3(-5)-lobed, glabrous or with fine appressed hairs, (10-)30-50(-80) × (15-)40-60(-100) mm; lobes obovate-cuneate, again shallowly 3-lobed and with crenate margins; petioles glabrous, (20-)50-100(-300) mm long. Upper cauline lvs similar; lobes becoming lanceolate, entire; uppermost lvs sessile, not lobed, becoming finely appressed-hairy. Fls usually > 30 per stem, 6-10 mm diam. Pedicels erect, numerous, with sparse, fine hairs, sulcate, 25-40(-60) mm long at fruiting. Sepals 5, hairy, deflexed, acute, 3-4 mm long. Petals 5, pale yellow, broadly obovate, 3.0-4.0 × 2.5 mm; nectary single, 0.5 mm from petal base, pocket-like. Receptacle elongated, cylindric, hairy. Achenes (100-)200-400(-1000), in cylindric heads, glabrous, hardly flattened, weakly keeled, obovoid, weakly rugulose; body c.1.0 × 0.8 mm; beak < 0.5 mm long

SIMILAR TAXA

Differs from other buttercups by the combination of glabrous deeply 3 to 5 lobed leaves, upright not creeping growth habit, deflexed sepals and cylindric rather than globose receptacle.

FLOWERING

Spring to autumn



Ranunculus sceleratus from the Taieri Scroll Plain. Photographer: John Barkla



Ranunculus sceleratus in flower. Photographer: John Barkla

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

FRUITING

Spring to autumn

LIFE CYCLE

Seed dispersed by water, animals or contaminated machinery.

YEAR NATURALISED

1878

ORIGIN

Europe, South, West and Central Asia, Northern and tropical Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Unknown, seed or soil contaminant

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Can be controlled manually, mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation.

ETYMOLOGY

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

POISONOUS PLANT

Resembles celery so sometimes mistakenly eaten. One of the most toxic buttercup species with the divided leaves causing blistering of the mouth and lips.

ATTRIBUTION

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

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. (1988). Flora of New Zealand Volume 4: Naturalised pteridophytes, gymnosperms, dicotyledons. Botany Division, DSIR, Christchurch.

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.

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MORE INFORMATION

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