

Ruppia polycarpa

COMMON NAMES

Horses mane weed, lakeweed

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizome prominent, and either much branched and congested giving rise to short stems and long leaves in dense grass-like mats or less closely branched with longer, sparsely branched stems. Leaves c.50–300 × 0.3–0.4 mm, dark green, almost filiform and only slightly flattened; apex obtuse, often most minutely denticulate; sheath (10-)25–35–50 mm long, auricles narrow. Peduncles to 0.5 m long, usually conspicuously thicker just below flowers, becoming spirally coiled as fruit matures. Flowers protandrous; carpels (5-)8(-16). Podogynes slender. Achenes (1.7-)2(-2.7) mm long, asymmetric, brown; mesocarp thin; endocarp smooth, black, with 2 longitudinal slits opposite to and about on level of top of operculum; beak 0.2–0.3 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Ruppia polycarpa differs from *R. megacarpa* by its curved to straight rather than zig-zagged branching pattern, obtuse rather than bidentate leaf apices; carpels usually 4 per flower (rather than (5-)8(-16)), and fruits which are 4-5 mm long rather than < 3 mm long. *Stuckenia pectinata* which sometimes grows with both species of *Ruppia* is superficially similar. It is easily distinguished from both *Ruppia* species by the ligulate acute-tipped leaves, tuberous stems, and spicate inflorescences.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North, South and Chatham Islands. Also in Australia

HABITAT

Saline ponds, lagoons, brackish streams, slow flowing fresh water streams and fresh water lakes from sea level to 700 m a.s.l.

GENUS

Ruppia

FAMILY

Ruppiaceae

AUTHORITY

Ruppia polycarpa R.Mason

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

No



Ruppia polycarpa (growth habit) - Chatham Islands, Rekohu (Chatham Island), Lake Te Wapu outlet, Kaiangaroa Beach. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 29/01/2020, Licence: CC BY.



Ruppia polycarpa (flowering inflorescence) - Chatham Islands, Rekohu (Chatham Island), Lake Te Wapu outlet, Kaiangaroa Beach. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 29/01/2020, Licence: CC BY.

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October - February

FRUITING

October - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Uncertain. Probably easily grown in suitable conditions but *Ruppia* is unlikely to be widely cultivated (if at all). Most people regard it as a pest and are only interested in eradicating it.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ETYMOLOGY

ruppia: Named after Heinrich Bernhard Ruppius (1689-1719), an 18th century German botanist

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 18

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 Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: Sp, DPR, DPS, DPT, EF, PF, RR, SO [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 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 2 March 2011. Description adapted from Moore & Edgar (1970). Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ruppia-polycarpa/>

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