Solanum linnaeanum

COMMON NAMES
apple of Sodom

BIOSTATUS
Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS
Not applicable

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

FLOWER COLOURS
Violet/Purple, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Perennial shrub to 1m tall, generally stellate-hairy, branched, strongly armed; pricles yellow, to approx. 1cm long, glabrous or nearly so. Petioles to around 5cm long, prickly. Lamina to about 9 x 7cm, ovate to oblong, deeply pinnatisect, scarcely lobed in seedlings; lobes irregular, sinuate, with rounded apices, extending to 7/8 midrib, with hairs scattered above and mostly dense below, sometimes glabrate except for prickles on midrib and main veins; base truncate to rounded. Cymes few-flowered; pedicels to approx. 1cm long, densely stellate-hairy. Calyx 3~12mm long, often densely stellate-hairy, sometimes prickly, accrescent; lobes ovate to oblong, mainly = tube. Corolla 2.5~3.5cm diam., mauve or violet, stellate-hairy outside; lobes broadly ovate. Anthers 4~6mm long. Berry 1.5~3cm diam., almost globose, mottled green and white when immature, yellow at maturity; stone cells 0. Seeds approx. 3mm diam., subglobose to broad-obovoid. (-Webb et. al., 1988)

SIMILAR TAXA
Shrub or subshrub to 1-(3) m tall with many yellow thorns, berries green and white changing to yellow at maturity. Can be distinguished from other prickly Solanum spp. by the combination of perennial woody habit with clump forming roots, green leaves, mauve or violet flowers, September-May.

HABITAT
Terrestrial.

GENUS
Solanum

FAMILY
Solanaceae

AUTHORITY
Solanum linnaeanum Hepper et P.-M. Jaeger

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

Karekare. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 25/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

Karekare. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 25/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

FLOWERING
September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April, May

FRUITING
September to May

YEAR NATURALISED
1883

ORIGIN
N Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
Ornamental

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Perennial.

POISONOUS PLANT
This species has been reported as poisonous if eaten.

ETYMOLOGY
solanum: Derivation uncertain - possibly from the Latin word sol, meaning “sun,” referring to its status as a plant of the sun. Another possibility is that the root was solare, meaning “to soothe,” or solamen, meaning “a comfort,” which would refer to the soothing effects of the plant upon ingestion.

NVS CODE
SOLLIN

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/solanum-linnaeanum/

PDF DATE
27 May 2026