

Stuckenia pectinata

COMMON NAME

Fennel-leaved pondweed, sago pondweed

SYNONYMS

Potamogeton pectinatus L., Coleogeton pectinatus (L.) D.H.Les et R.R.Haynes comb. inval.

FAMILY

Potamogetonaceae

AUTHORITY

Stuckenia pectinata (L.) Börner

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

NVS CODE

STUPEC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 78

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: PD, SO, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous to New Zealand where it has been collected from the North, South and Chatham Islands. A cosmopolitan species known from throughout the world. No critical study on its worldwide variation seems to have been done.

HABITAT

Usually in brackish water, such as in slow moving tidal streams or lagoons, but also found in shallow lowland pools.

FEATURES

Aquatic rhizomatous herb. Rhizomes forming extensive networks in soft sediment, forming swollen bulb-like buds in autumn. Branches numerous, slender, delicate (rather brittle), 0.1–3 m or more long. Stipulate, with stipules fused to leaf base, forming a sheathing ligulate stem for 10–40 mm, the free portion (ligule) membraneous, 5 mm long. Leaves all submersed, 50–120 x 1 mm, dark green to brown-green, entire, narrow-linear (with transverse veins visible), tapering to an acute, membraneous tip. Peduncles slender, of varying length. Inflorescence a discontinuous brown spike 20–40 mm, with the lower flower clusters (whorls) well separated. Fruit, an achene 3 x 2.5 mm, light pinkish brown, turgid and rounded, without keel or beak.



Close up of fennel-leaved pondweed.
Photographer: Rohan Wells



Fennel-leaved pondweed. Photographer: Rohan Wells

SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *Ruppia* spp. with which it often grows and from whose species it can be distinguished by the ligulate acute-tipped leaves, tuberous stems, and spicate inflorescences.

FLOWERING

January - February

FRUITING

January - March

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult and should not be removed from the wild.

THREATS

Probably more overlooked than actually threatened. Nevertheless there is some evidence that this species has declined for sites where it was formerly common over the least 20 or so years, and it remains absent from large stretches of apparently suitable habitat where it was once known 100 or more years ago. The main threat seems to be wetland modification and or drainage, particularly of those brackish wetland systems, or where streams and rivers enter the sea. However, the species can survive some modification and has even been collected in recently established channels, and within pools of water on the floor of gravel quarries. Thus this species may prove to be naturally uncommon rather than genuinely declining. Further field survey is needed to clarify its exact status.

ETYMOLOGY

pectinata: Comb-bearing

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE

The genus *Stuckenia* was erected in 1912. It differs from *Potamogeton* by the long stipular sheaths, tubular leaves with air channels bordering the midrib, flexuous peduncles, hydrophilous pollination and a hexaploid chromosome number ($x = 13$). Submerged leaves of *Stuckenia* are characteristically opaque and somewhat turgid. *Stuckenia* is further segregated from *Potamogeton* and *Groenlandia* by the fact that it never forms hybrids with either. *Stuckenia pectinata* is known to have aneuploids but the one New Zealand count known is not aneuploid and is typical of the species.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (January 2006). Description adapted from Moore & Edgar (1970)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. II. Government Printer, Wellington.

CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/stuckenia-pectinata/>