

Utricularia australis

COMMON NAMES

yellow bladderwort

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: RR, RF, SO?

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Orange, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

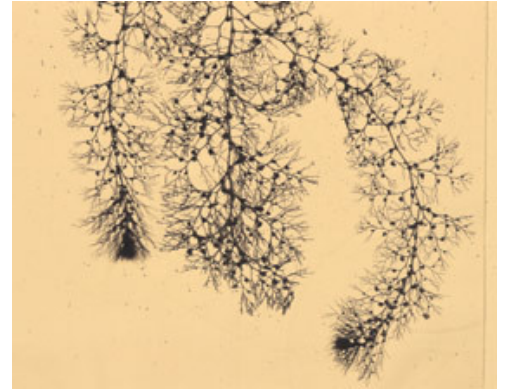
Wholly submerged, floating carnivorous aquatic plants dying down to turions (resting buds) in winter. Stems green to greenish-yellow, 400 mm or more long, filiform, sparingly branched. Leaves submerged, numerous, green to greenish-yellow, multifid 30-40 mm long, segments capillary up to 10 mm long. Bladders numerous and conspicuous, 1-4 mm long when mature, obliquely ovoid, mouth with 2 long setae, whole structure coloured dark blue to purple when mature and attached by short stalk near base of leaf segments. Inflorescence rarely seen, when present borne on a dark-green 2-4(-5)-flowered scape up to 170 mm long, this broad at base and tapering. Calyx lobes oblong to elliptic. Flowers dark yellow sometimes with a dark orange blotch on palate. Corolla upper lip 3-lobed, lower entire, 7-9 mm wide, broad, palate protruded; spur short, obtuse. Capsule 1.5-2 mm diameter, globose. Seeds not known in New Zealand.

SIMILAR TAXA

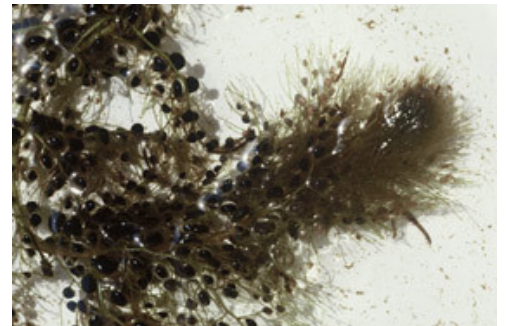
Utricularia gibba L. is an introduced species that has smaller, less divided floating stems and entire leaves. The upper lip of the corolla in this species is entire rather than 3-lobed as is seen in *U. australis*. *U. gibba* forms massive mats floating at the water surface and is usually always flowering while *U. australis* produces feathery, wholly submerged, floating stems and is very rarely found flowering. New Zealand examples of the naturalised *U. geminiscapa* Benj. differ from *U. australis* by their terminal leaves bearing small hairs, the internal portions of their bladders bearing quadrifid trichomes whose arms are in parallel, and by their cleistogamous flowering condition. *Utricularia australis* could be confused with the fully submerged, aquatic state of *Myriophyllum propinquum* A.Cunn., with which it sometimes grows. However, *Myriophyllum* can be readily distinguished from *U. australis* because it bears roots and the foliage lacks bladders

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand known only from the North Island, from Te Pahi to Lake Taupo, and near Paekakariki. Also present in Australia and Europe.



Herbarium specimen, locality not specified.
Photographer: A. J. Townsend, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Utricularia australis close up of bladders and new growth, Opuatia Wetlands. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 01/12/1986, Licence: CC BY-NC.

HABITAT

Coastal to lowland. Peat lakes, peaty pools and slow-moving streams draining peat bogs. Often found floating near or amongst spikerush (*Eleocharis sphacelata* R.Br.). *U. australis* appears to prefer shallow, still water, in sunny situations with little or no competition from other submerged aquatic plants.

THREATS

Now seriously at risk throughout most of its northern North Island range through competition from *Utricularia gibba* which occupies the same habitat and has a more aggressive growth form and also by other introduced aquatic weeds. It is also vulnerable to habitat loss through modification and drainage. There is some evidence which suggests it is selectively browsed by Canadian Geese and Black Swans

GENUS

Utricularia

FAMILY

Lentibulariaceae

AUTHORITY

Utricularia australis R.Br.

SYNONYMS

Utricularia protrusa Hook.f., *U. mairii* Cheeseman

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Flowers, December-March(-April), though some populations may never flower.

FRUITING

Seed has not yet been seen in New Zealand plants.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult and should not be removed from the wild.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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

ETYMOLOGY

utricularia: A small bladder

australis: Southern

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: RF, RR, SO

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: RF, RR, SO

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RR, SO

2004 | Gradual Decline

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT, 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.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Norton, D.A.; Rolfe, J.R.; Sawyer, J.W.D. 2010: Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch.

Salmon, B. 2001: Carnivorous plants of New Zealand. Ecosphere Publications, Manurewa.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2008). Description based on Salmon (2001), live and herbarium specimens - see also de Lange et al. (2010).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/utricularia-australis/>

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25 May 2026