

Utricularia gibba

COMMON NAME

bladderwort

FAMILY

Lentibulariaceae

AUTHORITY

Utricularia gibba Lam.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

UTRGIB

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Sprawling submerged plant often floating just under the waters surface, with finely divided thread-like leaves with tiny round bladders (often black). Usually many small yellow snapdragon-like flowers are held above the water surface in summer and autumn.

DISTRIBUTION

Abundant in Northland, Auckland and northern Waikato.

HABITAT

Most freshwater habitats, especially acidic and nutrient rich water.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Leaves are filamentous, up to 1 cm long, usually entire but occasionally branched. Bladders are up to 1.5 mm long and obliquely ovoid, situated on the leaves on short stalks. Small (c. 1 cm across) yellow flowers, with red stripes on the lower lip are commonly produced above the water surface either individually or in groups of up to 5 (8) on stems 3-20 cm long. Cleistogamous flowers are also produced on submerged stems. Capsules green, globose 2.5-3 mm across. Seed ovate, flattened with wing 0.75-1 mm x 0.7 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Utricularia australis (rare native species mostly in northern North Island) and *U. geminiscapa* (introduced species found in Westland). *Utricularia gibba* has entire or nearly entire leaves, whereas the other *Utricularia* species have leaves divided many times into filiform segments with larger bladders.

FLOWERING

December, January, February

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Yellow

FRUITING

Summer - autumn



Utricularia gibba. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Utricularia gibba. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

LIFE CYCLE

Perennial. Reproduces freely by seeds, turions, stem fragments. Forms dense mats. Dispersed by Water movement, dumped aquaria contents, contaminated machinery, eel nets, boats and trailers. Seed spread by water fowl.

YEAR NATURALISED

1980

ORIGIN

Widespread and almost cosmopolitan in tropical and warm temperate countries

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Originally known from northwest Auckland, possibly introduced via the aquarium trade. In late 1990's found in Northland and likely to have been introduced from Australia via water fowl. Has rapidly spread over the past decade.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Not usually controlled in New Zealand, but may be controlled manually, or mechanically.

TOLERANCES

Tolerant of clean or nutrient-rich, warm or cold, still or slow-moving water.

ETYMOLOGY

utricularia: A small bladder

gibba: From the Latin gibbus 'humped' or 'hunched', meaning gibbous, i.e. very convex or tumid

NATIONAL PEST PLANT ACCORD SPECIES

This plant is listed in the 2020 National Pest Plant Accord. The National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) is an agreement to prevent the sale and/or distribution of specified pest plants where either formal or casual horticultural trade is the most significant way of spreading the plant in New Zealand. For up to date information and an electronic copy of the 2020 Pest Plant Accord manual (including plant information and images) visit the [MPI website](#).

ATTRIBUTION

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

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Champion et al (2012). Freshwater Pests of New Zealand. NIWA publication.

<http://www.niwa.co.nz/freshwater-and-estuaries/management-tools/identification-guides-and-fact-sheets/freshwater-pest-species>.

Salmon, B. (2001). Carnivorous plants of New Zealand. Ecosphere Publications, Auckland. 303 pp.

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. 1365 pp.

MORE INFORMATION

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