

# Utricularia gibba

## COMMON NAME

Bladderwort

## FAMILY

Lentibulariaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Utricularia gibba* Lam.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Herbs other than Composites

## NVS CODE

UTRGIB

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not assessed

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Sprawling submerged plant often floating just under the water 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.

## FEATURES

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



Lake Waikere, Kai Iwi Lakes, Northland.  
Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe



*Utricularia gibba*. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

## 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

## 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/>