

# Viola banksii

## BIOSTATUS

Exotic

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple, White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Vigorous perennial herb spreading by stolons; rootstock sometimes somewhat swollen and bulbous at the stem bases. Stems contracted so that the leaves form rosettes. Leaves broad-reniform to orbicular, the largest 12–35 mm long (from the base of the sinus to the apex of the lamina), 20–65 mm wide, 1.0–2.0 times wider than long, with a narrow basal sinus; lamina with 10–20 +/- prominent teeth, glabrous, +/- concolorous bright green; stipules narrowly triangular to broadly triangular, usually with several small or elongate, glandular teeth on each side. Flowers on scapes to 15 cm long and exceeding the leaves, strongly discoloured violet-and-white; anterior petal 7–12 mm long, 5–10 mm wide, distinctly and regularly ovate to broad-elliptic, broadest in the middle third, usually emarginate, with a large green v-shaped blotch at the base then rich violet for over half its length contrasting sharply with a prominent white apex, prominently 3-nerved, the midnerve not or scarcely anastomosing with the lateral nerves which branch +/- regularly towards the margins; lateral petals widely spreading, 8–14 mm long, strongly twisted to c. 180°, rich violet at the base grading to white distally; beard covering half or more of the width of the lateral petals; dorsal petals 8–15 mm long, 4–9 mm wide, ovate to broadly obovate, erect to strongly reflexed, rich violet at the flexure, white for most of their length. Anthers 2.0–5.0 mm long, cream, often flushed or flecked with violet, the terminal appendages straw-coloured, with short, irregular hairs on the outer margins of the anther cells; anther glands whitish green (never purplish), almost as long as the anther cells, very prominent, broad and high, +/- smooth; pollen and interior margins of the anther cells yellow to golden. Ovary and fruit whitish or pale green, often flecked or flushed purple; style distinctly geniculate at its insertion on the ovary. Seeds 1.8–2.5 mm long, glossy purplish-black, +/- smooth to irregularly rugose.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*V. banksii* differs from *V. hederacea* in having larger, more richly coloured flowers, broad-ovate to broad-elliptic, almost semicircular anterior petals with triplinerved-pinnate rather than irregular venation, more strongly twisted, broader lateral petals with a more extensive beard, very large, prominent anther glands that are tall, broad and smooth, and purple-black seeds (Thiele & Prober 2003). Plants matching *Viola banksii* seem to be the only plant within the *V. hederacea* complex cultivated and wild in New Zealand.

## DISTRIBUTION

Sparingly naturalised in North and South Islands. Indigenous to Eastern Australia (Queensland, New South Wales)



Auckland. May 2007. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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## HABITAT

Waste land and rough lawn. A cultivation escape which seems to rarely (if ever) set seed in New Zealand, so spread is mostly (probably entirely) vegetative. Most occurrences are in urban areas where garden plants have spread onto footpaths or into lawns. However, increasingly this species is also seen establishing from garden waste dumped near settlements.

## GENUS

Viola

## FAMILY

Violaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Viola banksii* K.R.Thiele & Prober

## SYNONYMS

*Viola hederacea* auct. non. N.Z. authors <http://anpsa.org.au/> points out "research has shown that the commonly grown plant is different to the true *V.hederacea*."

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

The type of *Viola hederacea* came from Tasmania and plants matching the type are not present in New Zealand (c.f. Webb et al. 1988). *Viola hederacea* looks like this <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/19024215> at / or close to its type locality. Such plants are scarce in cultivation worldwide, whereas another plant long ascribed to *V. hederacea* is very commonly grown, and that plant seems to be the only one present in New Zealand (usually seen as an escape from cultivation). That plant has been segregated from *Viola hederacea* and is now known as *V. banksii* (Thiele & Prober 2003).

Although this species (as *Viola hederacea*) was recorded as 'naturalised' in New Zealand in 1988 (Webb et al. 1988) that date of naturalisation reflects the first published record of its self-establishment in New Zealand. *Viola banksii* has been grown in New Zealand for a long time and the naturalisation process has been ongoing for much of that time than the 1988 would suggest.

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

November - February

## YEAR NATURALISED

1988

## ORIGIN

Australia

## ETYMOLOGY

**viola:** The Latin name for violet

**banksii:** Named after Sir Joseph Banks, 1st Baronet, GCB, PRS (24 February 1743 - 19 June 1820) was an English naturalist, botanist and patron of the natural sciences.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Thiele, K.R.; Prober, S.M. 2003: Two new species and a new hybrid in the *Viola hederacea* species complex, with notes on *Viola hederacea* Labill. *Muelleria* 18: 7-25.

Webb CJ, Sykes WR, Garnock-Jones PJ 1988. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. IV. Botany Division, DSIR, Christchurch.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 21 December 2012. Description from Thiele & Prober 2003)

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/viola-banksii/>

**PDF DATE**

25 May 2026