

Zantedeschia aethiopica

COMMON NAMES

arum lily

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Evergreen clump forming plant with large arrowhead shaped leaves (up to 45 cm long and 25 cm wide) and pure white funnel shaped flowers (up to 25 cm long) with a bright yellow narrow sausage shaped centre (actually the flowers, the white part is a modified leaf).

FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Robust, evergreen, erect, clump-forming, to 1.5 m high, in close-set tufts from a tuberous rootstock with white fleshy roots; new tubers arising from shoots on the rootstock. Leaves large, leathery; laminae sagittate or ovate-cordate, 15-45 × 10-25 cm, dark green, the very fine veins somewhat lighter green, shining, entire, tip apiculate, margins undulate; petiole 40-100 cm long, lighter green, spongy, white on inside, purplish on outside. Scape ± = leaves, green, stout. Spathe ivory-white, bright green at base on outside, to 25 cm long, funnel-shaped, narrowed towards tip with a recurved apiculus to 2 cm long. Spadix ± ½ spathe, bright yellow; basal female zone, with staminodia interspersed, c. ¼-½ length of spadix, contiguous with upper male zone; sterile terminal appendage 0. Berries green or yellow, to ± 1 cm diam.

SIMILAR TAXA

Unlike most other wetland plants, but two other large plants in the arum family are superficially similar. Taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) and elephant ear (*Alocasia brisbanensis*) also have large leaves but arum can be distinguished by the veins of the leaf being the same colour as the rest of the leaf and the spathe being white

DISTRIBUTION

Scattered throughout northern North Island, less common in southern North Island and northern South Island.

HABITAT

Swampy areas, often under willows and damp pasture and waste land.

GENUS

Zantedeschia

FAMILY

Araceae



Slipper Lake, Northland. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 16/07/2006, Licence: CC BY.



Zantedeschia aethiopica. Photographer: Richard Hursthouse, Licence: CC BY.

AUTHORITY

Zantedeschia aethiopica (L.) Spreng.

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October to December

FRUITING

Summer to autumn

YEAR NATURALISED

1870

ORIGIN

South Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental plant

TOLERANCES

Tolerates wet (drought-resistant once established), wind, salt, hot to cold, most soil types, mod shade.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Can be controlled manually, mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. Seeds dispersed by water movement, birds and other animals. Local clonal spread by rhizomes, with longer distance spread by water movement, deliberate planting and garden discards.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

POISONOUS PLANT

When ingested this species causes burning of the mouth and alimentary canal. It also causes stomach pains and vomiting.

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](#).

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

ZANAET

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Croasdale, H., Flint E. A. and Racine, M. M. (1994). Flora of New Zealand Volume 3: Freshwater algae, chlorophyta, desmids with ecological comments on their habitats, Staurodesmus Staurastrum and the Filamentous desmids.

Manaaki Whenua Press: Lincoln, New Zealand.

Weeds of Australia

(http://keyserver.lucidcentral.org/weeds/data/03030800-0b07-490a-8d04-0605030c0f01/media/Html/Zantedeschia_aethiopica.htm)

Johnson PN, Brooke PA (1989). Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington. 319pp.

Popay et al (2010). An illustrated guide to common weeds of New Zealand, third edition. NZ Plant Protection Society Inc, 416pp.

ATTRIBUTION

Prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA). Features description taken from Croasdale et al. (1994).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/zantedeschia-aethiopica/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026