

Rorippa divaricata

COMMON NAMES

New Zealand watercress, matangoa

BIOSTATUS

Native

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Annual to perennial herb (depending on local growing conditions), 0.3-2 m tall, arising from stout taproot. Basal stem one (or more), erect to decumbent, glabrescent, woody, purple red when mature, somewhat angled. Leaves green, yellow-green, dark green or purple-green, margins sinuate, dentate to deeply toothed. Basal leaves petiolate, petiole broadly winged, grading into deflexed amplexicaul leaf lobes; lamina 30-160 x 20-80 mm, pinnatifid. Mid cauline leaves similar but smaller, upper cauline leaves much smaller, linear-lanceolate, simple, basally cuneately narrowed or amplexicaul. Inflorescence a complex, heavily branched raceme. Racemes 50-200 mm long. Pedicels 5-20 mm long at flowering, erecto-patent, spreading to deflexed at fruiting. Sepals 2-3 mm long. Petals white 2-3 mm long. Fruit a dark green to purple-green silique, 10-40 x 1-2 mm, spreading, linear, more or less terete, shallowly grooved along suture. Style remnant c.2 mm long. Seeds orange to red-brown, c.1 mm diam., extremely sticky when fresh.

SIMILAR TAXA

None.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Known from the Kermadec, Three Kings, North, South and Chatham Islands. It has not been seen on the Kermadecs for over 100 years but is still present on the Three Kings, Poor Knights and other Hauraki Gulf Islands. In the North Island it has been recorded recently from Kawhia, Hicks Bay and the Rotorua Lakes district. In the South Island it is known from and in the vicinity of the Abel Tasman National Park. On the Chatham Islands it has been collected once in 1985 and not reliably reported since.

HABITAT

A species of recently disturbed ground. Usually found in or near clearings, on recent slips or on track margins. Often on lake and river margins. Plants may also grow within active petrel colonies, often around burrow entrances. This species seems to do best in dappled light, and is often found in forested habitats. It has also been found in pine plantations.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, EF, PD, PF

THREATS

Weed competition is a major threat. Trampling, vegetation succession and vegetation clearance will also threaten populations. Plants are prone to drought. Browsing animals (possums, rodents, stock and feral pigs) and exotic insect pests (particularly cabbage white butterfly) are also significant threats.



Fanal island. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



In cult from Anapai, Abel Tasman National Park. Photographer: Simon Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Brassicaceae

AUTHORITY

Rorippa divaricata (Hook.f.) Garn.-Jones et Jonsell

SYNONYMS

Arabis gigantea Hook.f., Cardamine divaricata Hook.f., C. stylosa DC, Nasturtium stylosum (DC) Schulz, Rorippa stylosa (DC.) Allan, R. gigantea (Hook.f.) Garn.-Jones

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

Spring (can flower from October to February)

FRUITING

Summer (can fruit from October to May)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed. A very fast growing and weedy species which can become invasive.

OTHER INFORMATION

CULTIVATION

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE

The young leaves, stems, flowers, seed capsules, are delicately and pleasantly flavoured, and together with Cooks scurvy grass (*Lepidium oleraceum* Sparrman), celery (*Apium prostratum* subsp. *prostratum* var. *filiforme* (A.Rich) Kirk, and native spinach (*Tetragonia tetragonoides* (Pall.) Kuntze) make a great indigenous summer salad.

ETYMOLOGY

rorippa: A latinized form of Rorippen, a Saxon vernacular name used by Euricius Cordus

divaricata: Spreading or branching at wide angles

NVS CODE

RORDIV

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 48

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, EF

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: EF

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: EF

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

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.

Norton, D.A. and P.J. de Lange. 1999. Coastal cress (Nau) recovery plan. Threatened Species Recovery Plan 26. Department of Conservation

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2009). Description by P.J. de Lange subsequently published in de Lange et al (2010).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/rorippa-divaricata/>

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