

Urtica perconfusa

COMMON NAMES

swamp nettle

BIOSTATUS

Native

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Scrambling to sprawling, much-branched herb forming patches up to 2 m long. All parts covered in stinging hairs (these conspicuous but sparse on leaves). Leaves narrow, 40–100 × 4–10 mm, margins sharply toothed. Flowers green to reddish, clustered in short spikes in leaf axils.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Red/Pink

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Lianoid, slender, perennial, rhizomatous herb 0.45–2.0 m, usually much-branched, scrambling or climbing. Stem indumentum of few stinging hairs with pluricellular base c. 0.2–0.5 mm overall and erect setae 0.2–0.4 mm long and few simple trichomes 0.2–0.3 mm long. Leaf lamina 40–100 × 4–10 mm narrowly ovate; surface sparsely pubescent with short simple trichomes 0.2–0.5 mm long and few stinging hairs (abaxially only on the veins), adaxially with punctiform cystoliths; leaf base rounded; margins regularly dentate, rarely doubly dentate, with 12–20 teeth on each side; leaf apex acuminate; lamina thinly membranaceous; stipules free (4 per node) 2–4 mm long; petioles thin, flexuose, 15–45 mm long. Plants monoecious. Staminate flowers with tepals c. 1.3–1.8 mm long. Pistillate flowers with short tepals 0.5–0.8 mm long and long tepals 0.8–1.2 mm long, sparsely pubescent, esetulose. Inflorescence glomerulous, 3–10 mm long, usually shorter than petioles. Mature fruit with longer tepals 1.2–1.5 mm long, achenes subcircular in outline, rounded at base and at the tip, laterally flattened, c. 1.2–2.0 × 0.8–1.3 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from all other New Zealand nettles (*Urtica*) by the vine-like (lianoid) stems, sprawling growth habit, narrowly ovate leaves with rounded bases and by the inflorescences which are glomerulose, and 3–10 mm long

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand - and North and South Islands from the Central North Island south.

HABITAT

Fertile, lowland swamps, lakes and river margins, swampy shrubland and forest, often growing over tree stumps and rushes or through dense sedges such as swards of *Carex secta*.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp



Upper surface of leaf base (almost glabrous) and stinging hairs on petiole. Kaitoke Lake, Whanganui. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 01/04/2012, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Urtica perconfusa. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

THREATS

A sparsely distributed species of lowland to montane lake margins and fertile to semi-fertile wetlands. Easily overlooked because of its penchant for grow at the base of *Carex secta* trunks, or threaded through *Phormium tenax*. Being an adaptable species it is often found within willow (*Salix* spp.) car, sometimes as a low epiphyte on willow trunks. In all these habitats it is at risk from wetland clearance, drainage and also the spread of weeds such as wandering jew (*Tradescantia fluminensis*). Some large populations in the Horowhenua have been destroyed by the canalisation of streams and through willow control.

DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Urticaceae

AUTHORITY

Urtica perconfusa Grosse-Veldmann et Weigend

SYNONYMS

Urtica incisa var. *linearifolia* Hook.f.; *Urtica linearifolia* (Hook.f.) Cockayne

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

Flowering occurs throughout the year

FRUITING

Fruits may be found throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from rooted pieces, stem cuttings and fresh seed. Often spontaneously self-sows in cultivation.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

OTHER INFORMATION

CULTIVATION

Not commercially available. Some plants are held by specialist native plant growers and botanic gardens. An attractive plant but with a vicious sting! Will hybridise readily with *U. aspera* and *U. sykesii*. Such hybrids have been collected from the wild and in cultivation.

ETYMOLOGY

urtica: From the Latin verb urere which means "to burn"

NVS CODE

URTLIN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 24

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp

2004 | Gradual Decline

REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Grosse-Veldmann, B.; Conn, B.J.; Weigend, M. 2016: Weeding the nettles IV: A redefinition of *Urtica incisa* and allies in New Zealand and Australia, including the segregation of two new species *Urtica sykesii* and *U. perconfusa*. *Phytotaxa* 245(4): 251-261.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet by Peter J. de Lange (15 February 2016). Description based on Grosse-Veldmann et al. (2016).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/urtica-perconfusa/>

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31 October 2024