Utricularia australis

COMMON NAMES
yellow bladderwort

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

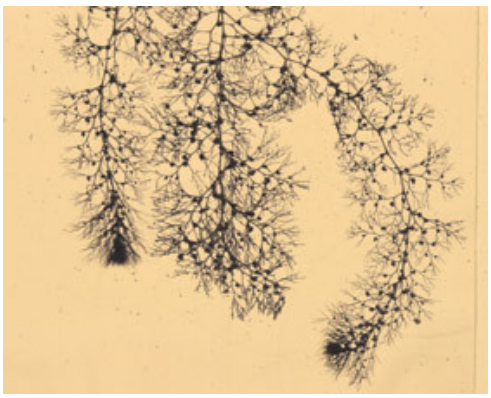
CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: RR, RF, SO?
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

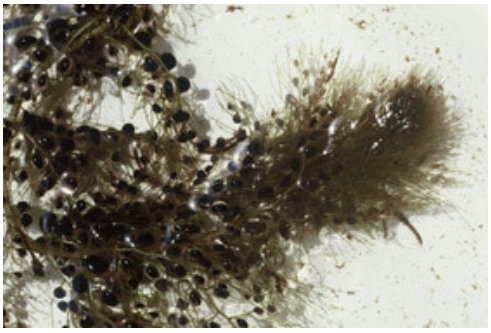
STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Orange, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Wholly submerged, floating carnivorous aquatic plants dying down to turions (resting buds) in winter. Stems green to greenish-yellow, 400 mm or more long, filiform, sparingly branched. Leaves submerged, numerous, green to greenish-yellow, multifid 30-40 mm long, segments capillary up to 10 mm long. Bladders numerous and conspicuous, 1-4 mm long when mature, obliquely ovoid, mouth with 2 long setae, whole structure coloured dark blue to purple when mature and attached by short stalk near base of leaf segments. Inflorescence rarely seen, when present borne on a dark-green 2-4(-5)-flowered scape up to 170 mm long, this broad at base and tapering. Calyx lobes oblong to ellpitic. Flowers dark yellow sometimes with a dark orange blotch on palate. Corolla upper lip 3-lobed, lower entire, 7-9 mm wide, broad, palate protruded; spur short, obtuse. Capsule 1.5-2 mm diameter, globose. Seeds not known in New Zealand.



Herbarium specimen, locality not specified. Photographer: A. J. Townsend, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Utricularia australis close up of bladders and new growth, Opuatia Wetlands. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 01/12/1986, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Utricularia gibba L. is an introduced species that has smaller, less divided floating stems and entire leaves. The upper lip of the corolla in this species is entire rather than 3-lobed as is seen in U. australis. U. gibba forms massive mats floating at the water surface and is usually always flowering while U. australis produces feathery, wholly submerged, floating stems and is very rarely found flowering. New Zealand examples of the naturalised U. geminiscapa Benj. differ from U. australis by their terminal leaves bearing small hairs, the internal portions of their bladders bearing bearing quadrifid trichomes whose arms are in parallel, and by their cleistogamous flowering condition. Utricularia australis could be confused with the fully submerged, aquatic state of Myriophyllum propinquum A.Cunn., with which it sometimes grows. However, Myriophyllum can be readily distinguished from U. australis because it bears roots and the foliage lacks bladders

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. In New Zealand known only from the North Island, from Te Paki to Lake Taupo, and near Paekakariki. Also present in Australia and Europe.

HABITAT
Coastal to lowland. Peat lakes, peaty pools and slow-moving streams draining peat bogs. Often found floating near or amongst spikerush (Eleocharis sphacelata R.Br.). U. australis appears to prefer shallow, still water, in sunny situations with little or no competition from other submerged aquatic plants.

THREATS
Now seriously at risk throughout most of its northern North Island range through competition from Utricularia gibba which occupies the same habitat and has a more aggressive growth form and also by other introduced aquatic weeds. It is also vulnerable to habitat loss through modification and drainage. There is some evidence which suggests it is selectively browsed by Canadian Geese and Black Swans

GENUS
Utricularia

FAMILY
Lentibulariaceae

AUTHORITY
Utricularia australis R.Br.

SYNONYMS
Utricularia protrusa Hook.f., U. mairii Cheeseman

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
Flowers, December-March(-April), though some populations may never flower.

FRUITING
Seed has not yet been seen in New Zealand plants.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Difficult and should not be removed from the wild.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
OBL: Obligate Wetland
Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
utricularia: A small bladder
australis: Southern

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: RF, RR, SO
2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: RF, RR, SO
2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RR, SO
2004 | Gradual Decline
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT, PF, RR, SO Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Northland: 2026 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau" Ford et al. 2026 report.

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.
Salmon, B. 2001: Carnivorous plants of New Zealand. Ecosphere Publications, Manurewa.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2008). Description based on Salmon (2001), live and herbarium specimens - see also de Lange et al. (2010).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/utricularia-australis/

PDF DATE

02 October 2026