

Alternanthera nahui

COMMON NAMES

nahui

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO?

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial herbs with a slender tap root; stems prostrate to decumbent, 1.5–3.0 mm diameter, green and flushed pink, glabrous to sparsely hairy, with 2 decurrent lines of hairs, nodes tomentose. Leaves 15–45 × 3–8 mm, usually narrowly elliptic-oblong to linear-oblong, sometimes narrowly elliptic or lanceolate, dark green, midrib raised on abaxial surface, glabrate to sparsely hairy on margins, midrib, and both surfaces; apex acute; margins entire, obscurely or sparsely denticulate; base attenuate. Spikes axillary, globular or shortly oblong, 5–7 mm diameter, with 15–22 flowers, apical flowers often failing to develop; peduncle ± sessile or up to 1.0 mm long, rachis with a few pilose hairs; pedicels ± sessile or up to 1 mm long; flowers subtended by 1 bract and 2 bracteoles; bracts 0.8–1.1 × 0.6–0.7 mm, ovate, cream, glabrous, membranous, subacute to shortly acuminate; bracteoles 1.2–1.5 × 0.3–0.5 mm, lanceolate, cream, glabrous, membranous, shortly acuminate to acute. Perianth segments (tepals) 2.0–3.3 × 0.6–0.9 mm, lanceolate to ovate, keeled, cream, glabrous, membranous, apex shortly acuminate to acute; keel prominent on mature, dry tepals. Stamens 3; anthers 0.15–0.25 mm long, yellow; filaments 0.3–0.5 mm long, free part 0.2–0.35 mm long, c. 1/3 length of ovary, translucent; staminodes 3, 0.15–0.3 mm long, usually shorter than filaments. Style up to 0.1–0.15 mm long; stigma capitate; ovary 0.4–0.5 mm long, green, compressed, apex obcordate, base cuneate. Fruit indehiscent utricle, 1.7–2.2 × 1.9–2.4 mm, broadly obovoid, cream to pale green, and usually flushed pink, compressed, surface colliculate, apex obcordate, base cuneate. Seeds 0.8–1.0 mm long, broadly obovate to ± circular, cream to yellow, with a raised light brown or orange-brown centre, glabrous, smooth, compressed, apex rounded, base rounded.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from *Alternanthera sessilis* (which is not present in New Zealand) by its much narrower leaves, distinctly keeled tepals, shorter staminodes, and shorter style, and from *A. denticulata* by its smaller stature and shorter and narrower leaves with less denticulate margins.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand, North and South Islands. Also Norfolk Island and possibly Australia



Inflorescences. Lake Waiporohita, Karikari Peninsula. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 21/02/2011, Licence: CC BY.



Alternanthera sessilis, Rarotonga. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

HABITAT

Predominantly a coastal to lowland species of seasonally to permanently wet habitats such as lagoon, lake, pond, river, and stream margins. It has also been recorded growing within the lag zone and around burn pools of oligotrophic peat bogs in Northland and Waikato, and from salt marshes. Also an urban weed in clogged gutters, drains and in damp lawns, verges and parkland.

GENUS

Alternanthera

FAMILY

Amaranthaceae

AUTHORITY

Alternanthera nahui Heenan et de Lange

SYNONYMS

Has been incorrectly referred to *Alternanthera sessilis* (L.) Roem. & Schult. by past New Zealand authors

TAXONOMIC NOTES

True *A. sessilis* differs from *A. nahui* by its much wider elliptic to rhomboidal leaves (see image from Rarotonga). *Alternanthera sessilis* is widespread in tropical Australia, Indonesia, Malaysian, southern China and the Pacific islands.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January - December

FRUITING

January - December

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Articles are dispersed by attaching to fur, feathers and clothing (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed, rooted pieces and cuttings. However can be rather weedy and aggressive.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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

ETYMOLOGY

alternanthera: From the Latin *alternus* 'alternate' and the Greek *anthera* 'anther', meaning alternating anther, probably in reference to the anthers being alternately fertile and barren.

NVS CODE

ALTNAH

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 28

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO?

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland](#)" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Heenan et al. (2009): *Alternanthera nahui*, a new species of Amaranthaceae indigenous to New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 47: 97-105.

ATTRIBUTION

Description from: Heenan et al. (2009): *Alternanthera nahui*, a new species of Amaranthaceae indigenous to New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 47: 97-105.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alternanthera-nahui/>

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