

Acanthus mollis

COMMON NAME

bear's breeches

FAMILY

Acanthaceae

AUTHORITY

Acanthus mollis L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

HABITAT

Usually found near old settlements, in partial shade and along riverbanks.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial herb to about 120 cm, with thick roots. Petiole usually 10-50 cm on leaves arising from the root crown, much shorter (2-5 cm) on leaves arising from vertical stem. Leaves variable, but usually dark green and with several lobes. White flowers with pink, purple or brownish veins are produced on the central tall spike, these mature first at the bottom of the spike. Seeds are produced in individual capsules 3-4 cm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished by the large divided leaves and the distinctive flower head.

FLOWERING

October, November, December, January, February, March, April

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

FRUITING

November, December, January, February, March, April, May

LIFE CYCLE

Primarily escapes from cultivation by vegetative spread, although seed is viable. Dispersed by gravity, water and birds. Root fragments grow easily and once established this plant can be hard to eliminate from a site.

YEAR NATURALISED

1958

ORIGIN

S.W. Europe

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental

TOLERANCES

Can tolerate moderate shade, but flowers best in at least partial light.



Hutt River Trail, Silverstream, Upper Hutt.
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Acanthus mollis. Photographer: Richard
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ETYMOLOGY

acanthus: From the Greek ákantha 'thorn'

mollis: Soft

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/acanthus-mollis/>