

# Helminthotheca echioides

## COMMON NAME

Oxtongue

## FAMILY

Asteraceae

## AUTHORITY

Helminthotheca echioides (L.) Holub

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

## NVS CODE

HELECH

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## HABITAT

A common weed of waste land, pasture, urban areas, and forest margins. Coastal to montane.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

UPL: Obligate Upland

Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands (non-wetlands).

## SIMILAR TAXA

The stem and leaf indumentum of oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides* (L.) Holub) has 2-, 3-, 4- or 5-hooked anchor hairs and the hairs of the leaves arise from a conspicuous swollen base. The involucre bracts of the flowers are in two rows, with the five outer involucre bracts ovate to cordate, and the apex of the inner bracts feather-like. Unlike our indigenous oxtongue (*Picris* spp.) the achenes of the introduced oxtongue (*H. echioides*) are dimorphic: the outer achenes, are larger, white, and pilose hairy; the inner shorter, dark-brown and glabrous. In our indigenous oxtongues (*Picris* spp.) the achenes are never heteromorphic.

## FLOWERING

Year round in warm climates - otherwise August - May

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Yellow

## FRUITING

Present year round in warm climates otherwise October - July

## YEAR NATURALISED

1869

## ORIGIN

S. Europe, S.W Asia, N. Africa - long known in New Zealand as *Picris echioides* L.



*Helminthotheca echioides*. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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**Reason For Introduction**

Probably accidental

**Life Cycle Comments**

Biennial to short-lived perennial. Sometimes annual in harsh conditions.

**Reproduction**

Exclusively by seed

**Seed**

Dimorphic. Outer achenes are white and larger than the brown inner achenes. Seed is probably long-lived as this species turns up in agricultural grassland soil that has been recently ploughed

**Dispersal**

Wind dispersed. The seeds also attach to clothing, wool and other fibres

**Tolerances**

Moderately drought and cold tolerant.

**MORE INFORMATION**

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/helminthotheca-echioides/>