

Houttuynia cordata

COMMON NAME

houttuynia

FAMILY

Saururaceae

AUTHORITY

Houttuynia cordata Thunb.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

HABITAT

Terrestrial. Wetlands, gardens, freshwater margins, damp ground, forest, shrubland and fenland.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dense, deciduous (semi-evergreen in warm areas) groundcover herb to 1m. Slender couch-like rhizomes. Stems creeping and semi-ascending. leaves heart-shaped, up to 7 cm long, usually variegated cream, bronze, scarlet and green, soon reverting to green. Peppery scent when crushed. Flowerhead a small spike with minute flowers and 4 white bracts (petals) at the base, Dec-Feb. Usually dies back to rootstock over winter.

SIMILAR TAXA

Ivy has similar leaves but woody stems. 3 coloured leaves (green, red, creamy) inmost commonly cultivated form. Leaves are unpleasant-smelling.

FLOWERING

December, January, February

FLOWER COLOURS

White

LIFE CYCLE

Reproduces by rhizome fragments or possibly seeds.

ORIGIN

Japan South to mountains of Nepal and Java.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental plant

ETYMOLOGY

houttuynia: Named for Dr Maarten Houttuyn (1720 – 1798), a Dutch botanist.

NATIONAL PEST PLANT ACCORD SPECIES

This plant is listed in the 2020 National Pest Plant Accord. The National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) is an agreement to prevent the sale and/or distribution of specified pest plants where either formal or casual horticultural trade is the most significant way of spreading the plant in New Zealand. For up to date information and an electronic copy of the 2020 Pest Plant Accord manual (including plant information and images) visit the [MPI website](#).



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REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Johnson, A. T. and Smith, H. A (1986). Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning. Landsman Bookshop Ltd: Buckenhill, UK.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/houttuynia-cordata/>