

Alternanthera denticulata

COMMON NAME

lesser joyweed

SYNONYMS

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

FAMILY

Amaranthaceae

AUTHORITY

Alternanthera denticulata R.Br.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

ALTDEN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 28

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP, SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. Common in Australia (where the species was described from). There is some uncertainty as to its exact status in New Zealand, and while most of the populations seen appear to be indigenous, it seems likely that at least some locations may represent independent naturalisations from Australia (see Heenan & de Lange, N.Z.J.Bot. 42: 739-745 (2004))

HABITAT

Coastal to lowland fertile wetlands, lake margins, river banks and around waterfalls, and in damp ground within forest, also a weed of drains, pig yards, and damp ground within urban areas

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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



Mangere Bridge, Auckland. Photographer: Mike Wilcox, Date taken: 01/04/2006, Licence: All rights reserved.



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

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial herb. Stems prostrate to erect, somewhat lianoid, rooting at nodes, green flushed pink, glabrous to sparsely hairy, nodes tomentose. Leaves (20-)30-80 x 6-12 mm, narrowly elliptic or lanceolate, or linear to linear oblong, light green, yellow green or glaucous flushed pink, with midrib and lateral veins pink, glabrate, apex acute, margins distinctly denticulate. Spikes globular to shortly oblong 5-8 mm diam., clustered with 15-20 flowers. Flowers subtended by 1 bract and 2 bracteoles, these 1.5-2 x 0.6-0.8 mm, lanceolate, cream, glabrous, shortly acuminate to acute. Perianth segments 2.3-2.4 x 0.6-0.8 mm, lanceolate, cream, glabrous, shortly acuminate to acute, anthers 0.15 mm long, yellow, style 0.1-0.2 mm, stigma capitate. Fruit 1.7-1.8 x 1.9-2.1 mm, cream flushed pink, obovoid, indehiscent. Seeds 0.9-1 x 0.8-0.9 mm, cream to yellow, with a light brown centre, compressed.

SIMILAR TAXA

Closely related to *A. nahui* Heenan et de Lange. From which it differs by its more gracile growth habit and by the much broader, distinctly denticulate leaves. Hybrids between *A. denticulata* and *A. nahui* have been recorded.

FLOWERING

January - December

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Yellow

FRUITING

January - December

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces, cuttings and seed but inclined to become very weedy.

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.

denticulata: Finely toothed

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available. Rather weedy and unattractive but the leaves are eaten as a vegetable by some ethnic groups.

ATTRIBUTION

Description from Heenan and de Lange (2004).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Heenan, P.B.; de Lange, P.J. 2004: *Alternanthera denticulata* (Amaranthaceae) in New Zealand: a new addition to the indigenous or naturalised flora? *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 42: 739-745.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alternanthera-denticulata/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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