

Alternanthera nahui

COMMON NAME

nahui

SYNONYMS

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

FAMILY

Amaranthaceae

AUTHORITY

Alternanthera nahui Heenan et de Lange

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

ALTNAH

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 28

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO?

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

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

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.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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



Alternanthera nahui Inflorescence.

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



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

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.

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

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

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.

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

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.

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.

MORE INFORMATION

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