

Gymnocoronis spilanthoides

COMMON NAME

Senegal tea

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Gymnocoronis spilanthoides (D. Don) DC.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Sprawling emergent perennial herb, becoming upright when flowering. Leaves are dark green, opposite, and ovate to lanceolate in shape. They vary in size from 5 to 20 cm long, 2.5 to 5 cm wide, and are on shortish stalks. Leaf margins are serrate and slightly wavy. Flowers are whitish, numerous and highly scented.

HABITAT

Aquatic: Emergent. The plant grows in wet marshy soils and at water margins, Plant grows in wetland communities in still or flowing water.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial aquatic herb to 1+ m high. Roots finely fibrous, also aerially from stem nodes. Stems erect at first, becoming prostrate, branching and rooting at nodes, 1-1.5 m long, 5-10 mm diam at first, to 20 mm with age, hollow, inflated, floating. Leaves paired with opposite stalks joined at stem, 50-200 x 25-50 mm, lance-shaped, dark green, serrate, slightly wavy. Flowerhead clover-like, with many thin white florets, Nov-Apr. Seed yellow-brown, 5 mm diam. Plant dormant over Winter, dies back to rootstock if chilled, resprouts in Spring.

SIMILAR TAXA

Is similar to *Alternanthera philoxeroides* (alligator weed) when in its sprawling phase but can be differentiated from alligator weed by its narrower leaves with serrated margins and reddish tinge. *G. spilanthoides* also has clusters of flowers.

FLOWERING

December, January, February, March, April, May.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

summer/autumn



Gymnocoronis spilanthoides. Photographer: Auckland Regional Council, Licence: Public domain.



Gymnocoronis spilanthoides. Photographer: Auckland Regional Council, Licence: Public domain.

LIFE CYCLE

Perennial. Plants are dormant in winter, producing shoots in spring from protected buds in the nodes and crown. Reproduces sexually by seed. Vegetative reproduction occurs through the production of roots at stem nodes and vegetative fragmentation.

Seed stems and root fragments are dispersed in water, on livestock hooves and machinery. Can also be spread by dumped aquaria contents when liberating fish.

YEAR NATURALISED

1991

ORIGIN

South America.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental aquarium and pond plant. Was sold in the aquarium trade as *costata*.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Notify regional council if found

TOLERANCES

The plant is tolerant to shade, frost and poor drainage and intolerant to drought.

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](#).

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Champion et al (2012). Freshwater Pests of New Zealand. NIWA publication.

<http://www.niwa.co.nz/freshwater-and-estuaries/management-tools/identification-guides-and-fact-sheets/freshwater-pest-species>.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/gymnocoronis-spilanthoides/>