

Helosciadium nodiflorum

COMMON NAME

water celery, fool's watercress

SYNONYMS

Apium nodiflorum (L.) Lagasca

FAMILY

Apiaceae

AUTHORITY

Helosciadium nodiflorum (L.) W.D.J.Koch

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

APINOD

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Sprawling emergent perennial aquatic plant that can grow over a metre in height, with bright green leaves arranged in pairs up each stem, and white flowers close to leaf bases.

DISTRIBUTION

Scattered distribution from Northland to Wellington, abundant in many areas. Has also established in the north and west of the South Island.

HABITAT

Shallow water ponds, drains, and the margins of slow moving streams.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout perennial herb with prostrate and ascending stems. The stems are hollow, finely furrowed, may be up to 2m long and root at the lower nodes. The leaves are glossy, bright green to 70 cm long with 2 to 8 pairs of toothed stalkless oval to lance-shaped leaflets. The individual flowers are small (2 to 2 mm) with five white petals, and occur in short stalked clusters/umbels (2 to 4 cm) in diameter. The fruit are dark brown, small (2mm long) and ovoid/egg shaped and ribbed.

SIMILAR TAXA

Wild celery (*Apium graveolens*), New Zealand celery (*Apium prostratum*) and Watercress (*Nasturtium* spp.). Wild celery is similar but does not root at the nodes, and NZ celery has thicker three lobed and shortly pinnate leaves.

FLOWERING

November to February

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

Late summer to autumn



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



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

LIFE CYCLE

Seed germinate on damp substrates. Regrows from detached shoots, which readily form roots, and from seed. It can be mistaken for watercress and be collected and distributed as such.

YEAR NATURALISED

1947

ORIGIN

Native to Britain, central Europe, Asia and North Africa.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Possibly seed contaminant or contaminant of ornamental pond plants.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Can be controlled manually, mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation (Newman, 2004).

TOLERANCES

Seed germinate on damp substrates.

ATTRIBUTION

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

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Johnson PN, Brooke PA (1989). Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington. 319pp.

Newman J (2004), Information sheet 28: Fools watercress. Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, UK.

Popay et al (2010). An illustrated guide to common weeds of New Zealand, third edition. NZ Plant Protection Society Inc, 416pp.

Johnson, A. T., Smith, H. A. (1972). Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning. Landsman Bookshop Ltd: Buckenhill, UK.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/helosciadium-nodiflorum/>