

Hibiscus tridactylites

COMMON NAME

bladder ketmia

FAMILY

Malvaceae

AUTHORITY

Hibiscus tridactylites Lindl.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 56

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

DISTRIBUTION

Naturalised to New Zealand where it has been discovered in Auckland City (2013). Indigenous to Australia where it can be a troublesome weed of agricultural land and crops (such as cotton, soybean, grain and sorghum) (Craven et al. 2011)

HABITAT

Uncommon urban weed. Occasionally cultivated (and then erroneously referred to as *Hibiscus trionum*)



Auckland. Mar 2013. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Herb 0.15-0.4(-1.3) m tall. Branchlet with fine stellate hairs 0.4-0.8 mm long and coarse stellate hairs 0.2-0.8 mm long, with sparse fine bristles 0.25-0.4mm long. Stipules more or less persistent, 4-6 mm long. Mid-stem and distal leaves 3-lobed, lobing extended to the apex of the petiole, the primary lobes themselves strongly lobed, palmately veined; lamina of mid-stem leaves 20-90 mm long, 25-80 mm wide, in overall shape ovate, broadly ovate, or suborbicular with stellate hairs and fine bristles, margin sparsely serrate, lobe apex rounded; petiole 20-50 mm long with indumentum similar to that of the branchlet; foliar nectary absent. Flowers solitary in leaf axils, chasmogamous, pedunculate; peduncle 15-60 mm long, with stellate hairs and with sparse fine bristles; pedicel 0.25-0.6 mm long, indumentum dissimilar to that of peduncle (the hairs slightly denser and longer). Epicalyx 10-13-segmented, 6.5-11.0 mm long, segments linear, free at the base, shorter than the calyx. Calyx at anthesis 11-14 mm long, distinctly accrescent in fruit, with stellate hairs and coarse bristles, without prominent marginal ribs; lobes triangular, acute at the apex; calyx nectary absent. Petal 22-30 mm long, yellow or cream with a large purplish basal petal spot. Staminal column straight. Staminal column at the apex 5-toothed. Staminal column 7-12 mm long with the stamens distributed along the distal 1.6-4.0 mm of the column; staminal filaments 2-3 mm long; anthers yellow; pollen yellow. Style (including style branches) exerted 2-3 mm beyond the apex of the staminal column; style branches 5, 0.7-0.9 mm long; stigmas capitate, 0.4-0.6 mm across, stigmatic hairs 0.2-0.3 mm long. Ovary hairy. Fruit capsulate. Capsule hairy, 12-16 mm long. Seed 2.3-2.5 mm long, subreniform, papillate-pubescent and smooth between the hair pustules.

SIMILAR TAXA

Hibiscus richardsonii and *H. trionum* "diploid New Zealand race" from which *H. tridactylites* differs by the mid-stem and distal leaves lobed to the apex of the petiole, by the pedicel which is 0.25-0.6mm long, and tetraploid ($2n = 56$) rather than diploid ($2n = 28$) chromosome number. From *Hibiscus richardsonii* it is also readily distinguished by the purple basal petal spot (absent in *H. richardsonii*).

FLOWERING

October - June

FRUITING

December - August

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. In New Zealand probably not invasive (unlike Australia) but seed is long-lived (and overtime a large seed bank is developed) and prone to germinate following ground disturbance.

YEAR NATURALISED

2013

ORIGIN

Australia

ETYMOLOGY

hibiscus: Name of very ancient origin used by the Roman poet Virgil for the marsh mallow plant.

NOTES

Herbarium evidence suggests that *H. tridactylites* has been occasionally cultivated in New Zealand (Auckland) for the last 60 or so years. The sole, wild occurrence was of a plant that appeared in a bark garden. However, *H. tridactylites* had not knowingly been cultivated in that area previously.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared for NZPCN by: P.J. de Lange (4 March 2013). Description from Craven et al. (2011).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Craven, L.A.; de Lange, P.J.; Lally, T.R.; Murray, B.G.; Johnson, S.B. 2011. The indigenous Australasian bladder ketmia species (*Hibiscus trionum* complex, Malvaceae). *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 49: 27-40.

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

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Hibiscus tridactylites Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/hibiscus-tridactylites/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/hibiscus-tridactylites/>