

Lemna disperma

COMMON NAME

common duckweed

SYNONYMS

Lemna minor L. has been applied, incorrectly, for New Zealand plants

FAMILY

Araceae

AUTHORITY

Lemna disperma Hegelm.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

NVS CODE

LEMMIN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 20, 30, 42, 40$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands (Uncommon on Stewart and Chatham Islands). Otherwise cosmopolitan.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane (up to 400 m a.s.l.). In still, fertile water usually in sunny situations (rarely in shade). Often growing intermixed with *Landoltia punctata* (G.Mey.) Les et D.J.Crawford, *Azolla filiculoides* Lam., *Wolffia australiana* (Benth.) Hartog et Plas, *Ricciocarpos natans* (L.) Corda and *Riccia fluitans* L.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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



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



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

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Platelets up to 6 x 4 mm, suborbicular to elliptic-obovate, nearly symmetric, bearing 1-2 vegetative buds per platelet; dorsal surface bright green to yellow-green, faintly 3-veined; ventral surface paler and often tinged with red or purple, flat to slightly convex. Root single, peltately attached, rather long for size of plant, proximal portion lying in a fine furrow in the platelet tissue; root-cap conspicuous. Inflorescence in lateral pouch, partly enclosed by spathe; spathe opened at apex. Ovule solitary. Fruit ovoid, wingless, projecting beyond the pouch margin. Seed obovate, flattened, smooth; operculum prominent, more or less flattened.

SIMILAR TAXA

Could only be confused with the introduced *Landoltia punctata* (also known as *Spirodela oligorrhiza* (Kurz) Hegelm) which differs by its larger size, platelets whose ventral surface is usually dark purple (rather than pale green), and which bear 2 or more (rather than one) roots.

FLOWERING

November - February

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

FRUITING

December - April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a sunny site within a pond, or similar still or slowly flowing body of water. An excellent aquarium plant. However, can be invasive in some situations, especially in nutrient rich water. An important food for many invertebrates, tadpoles, fish and some dabbling birds

TAXONOMIC NOTES

New Zealand plants have been referred to *L. minor* L. which is a widespread northern hemisphere species which little resembles the New Zealand plant and may not even be here (indeed Landolt (2011) states that only *L. disperma* is present in New Zealand, and that *L. minor* is a very uncommon naturalised species in Australia). Irrespective New Zealand plants are cytologically variable and there is still some doubt as to the whether *L. disperma* is indeed the most appropriate name for some or all of them. Further research is needed.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P. J. de Lange 31 August 2007.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Landolt, E. 2011: Lemnaceae Pp. 274-282. Flora of Australia 39. Alismatales to Arales. ABRS/CSIRO, Melbourne, Australia.

Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. II. Government Printer, Wellington.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lemna-disperma/>