

Linum catharticum

COMMON NAME

purging flax

FAMILY

Linaceae

AUTHORITY

Linum catharticum L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

LINCAT

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Slender, delicate herb, with narrow paired leaves, up to 1 cm long, well separated up the thin stems, with an open branched flowerhead with small (1 cm across) white flowers.

DISTRIBUTION

Locally common throughout.

HABITAT

Wet grassland, dunes, margins of waterbodies, often in areas that are seasonally dry.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Slender biennial herb up to 30-(35) cm high. Stems glabrous, simple to much-branched at base. Stem lvs always opposite, glabrous, oblong to narrowly elliptic-obovate, usually obovate at base of stem, obtuse to acute, 1-veined, entire, (3)-5-12-(15) mm long; lvs subtending infl.-branches single or paired, similar to stem lvs but shorter, narrower and sometimes acuminate. Infl. of few to numerous fls in a diffuse compound dichasium; sepals elliptic, acuminate, glandular, ciliate, 2-3 mm long, slightly < or \pm = to capsule; petals white, about 2 \times as long as sepals, 3.5-5 mm long; styles free to base. Capsule glabrous, globose, dehiscent, 2-3 mm diam.; seeds boat-shaped, shiny light brown, c. 1 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

No other *Linum* in New Zealand is as delicate or has opposite leaves.

FLOWERING

October to April

FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

FRUITING

Summer and autumn

LIFE CYCLE

Seed dispersed by water or contaminated machinery.



YEAR NATURALISED

1896

ORIGIN

Europe, western Asia and North Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Unknown, seed or soil contaminant.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Not controlled in New Zealand.

ETYMOLOGY

linum: Flax

ATTRIBUTION

Prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA). Features description from Webb et al., (1988).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. (1988). Flora of New Zealand Volume 4: Naturalised pteridophytes, gymnosperms, dicotyledons. Botany Division, DSIR, Christchurch.

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/linum-catharticum/>