

Nasturtium officinale

COMMON NAME

Watercress

FAMILY

Brassicaceae

AUTHORITY

Nasturtium officinale R.Br.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

NASOFF

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

A bright green, robust, creeping or upright herb that has small white flowers in spring through summer, and is found along the margins of slow flowing shallow waters.

DISTRIBUTION

Common throughout New Zealand.

HABITAT

Aquatic: Emergent. Marginal aquatic plant, can grow in water up to 6m in depth (Waikoropupu springs)

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial stoloniferous herb. Stems trailing, glabrous, to several m long. Leaves glabrous, all similar, but becoming smaller near inflorescence. Pinnate, petiolate, 2-10-(25) x 1-5 cm; basal auricles small; leaflets rounded, ovate; margins entire or sinuate. Pedicels glabrous, slender, erecto-patent, spreading to deflexed at fruiting, (5)-10-15-(18) mm long (very rarely to 30 mm). Sepals 1.5-2.5 x 0.7-1.5 mm. Petals white, (3)-4-6 x (1)-1.5-2.5 mm. Silique glabrous, narrow-oblong, curved, (8)-12-15-(18) x 2-2.5 mm; valves with distinct midrib, at least below; style c. 1 mm long. Seeds distinctly in 2 rows per locule, brown, c. 1mm long, coarsely reticulate with 20-50 polygonal depressions per face.

SIMILAR TAXA

Very similar to *N. microphyllum*, but differs in its seed surface and also tends to have smaller flowers, shorter pedicels and broader siliques.

FLOWERING

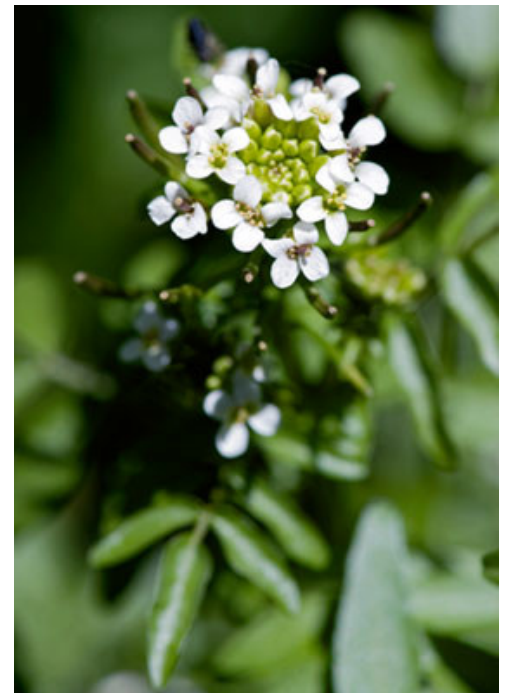
August - May

FLOWER COLOURS

White



Rimutaka Rail Trail. Dec 2006. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Licence: CC BY.



Flower, Rimutaka Rail Trail. Dec 2006. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Licence: CC BY.

FRUITING

(August)-November-February-(May)

LIFE CYCLE

Perennial, reproduces by stem fragmentation and see

YEAR NATURALISED

1852

ORIGIN

Eurasia, Northern Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Culinary herb (Healy 1962)

ETYMOLOGY

officinale: From the Latin officina shortened from opificina which originally meant 'workshop' but later came to mean a monastic storeroom, herb-room or pharmacy. Refers to the plant's medicinal value.

ATTRIBUTION

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

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

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

Aston, H (1977). Aquatic plants of Australia. Melbourne University Press, 367pp.

Healy, A.J. (1998). Some consequences of the introduction of watercress by the French at Akaroa. Canterbury Botanical Society 33: 9-10.

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. 1365 pp.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/nasturtium-officinale/>