

Parietaria officinalis

COMMON NAME

Pellitory, pellitory of the wall, lichwort

FAMILY

Urticaceae

AUTHORITY

Parietaria officinalis L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

HABITAT

The name of this genus, *Parietaria*, is derived from the Latin word *paries* (a wall). It is commonly found growing from nooks and crannies in dry walls hence the popular English name. It will frequently grow in stony rubbish.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

It is a much-branched, bushy, herbaceous, perennial plant, growing to 0.6m by 0.6m. It has reddish, brittle stems and narrow, stalked leaves 3 to 6cm long. The stems and veins of the under surface of the leaves have short, soft hairs, the upper surface of the leaves is nearly smooth, with sunken veins. The small, green stalkless flowers grow in clusters in the axils of the leaves and are in bloom all the summer. The filaments of their stamens are jointed and so elastic that if touched before the expansion of the flower, they suddenly spring from their incurved position and scatter their pollen. The whole plant can be used for cleaning glass such as windows and also copper containers. It was once used as a medicinal herb.

SIMILAR TAXA

Parietaria judaica and the native *Parietaria debilis*.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

YEAR NATURALISED

1981

ORIGIN

N. Africa, C. and S. Europe to Asia

ETYMOLOGY

officinalis: 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 real or perceived medicinal value.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/parietaria-officinalis/>

