

# Persicaria hydropiper

## COMMON NAME

water pepper

## SYNONYMS

*Polygonum hydropiper*

## FAMILY

Polygonaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Persicaria hydropiper* (L.) Spach

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## NVS CODE

POLHYD

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Erect annual herb up to ca 75cm tall, with reddish stems, willow-shaped leaves and long slender flower spikes with small white (greenish flowers).

## DISTRIBUTION

Abundant in lowland regions of the North and South Islands.

## HABITAT

Occurs on the edge of river banks and marshy areas, also occurring as a submerged plant in clear moderate flowing streams. Not usually grazed by livestock, especially cattle.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The leaves are bright green, without markings, they are narrow and lance shaped with a wavy edge, and up to 12 cm long. There is a membranous sheath (ochrea) at the base of each leaf, that is fringed with short hairs. The inflorescence is slender and drooping, the small flowers occur on short stalks, they are pink or cream (rarely white to greenish white). The fruit is a dull, pitted, dark brown nut. The plant is burning (peppery) to taste

## SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from *Persicaria decipiens* when flowering by the yellow glands on the tepals of *Persicaria hydropiper*. The flower heads of *P. decipiens* are usually erect, and the leaves are dark green/red and often have dark blotches on them; it also lacks the peppery flavour of *P. hydropiper*

## FLOWERING

November-June



*Polygonum hydropiper*. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



*Polygonum hydropiper*. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Green

## FRUITING

Autumn

## LIFE CYCLE

Spreads by seed dispersed by water or waterfowl.

## YEAR NATURALISED

1906

## ORIGIN

Temperate Eurasia, North Africa

## REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Unknown, possibly a seed contaminant

## CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Not controlled in New Zealand.

## ETYMOLOGY

**persicaria**: Medieval name referring to the likeness of the leaves to a peach tree

## ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

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

Coffey BT, Clayton JS (1988). New Zealand water plants: a guide to plants found in New Zealand freshwaters. Ruakura Agricultural Centre. 65pp.

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/persicaria-hydropiper/>