

Urtica perconfusa

COMMON NAME

swamp nettle

SYNONYMS

Urtica incisa var. *linearifolia* Hook.f.; *Urtica linearifolia* (Hook.f.) Cockayne

FAMILY

Urticaceae

AUTHORITY

Urtica perconfusa Grosse-Veldmann et Weigend

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

URTLIN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 24

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp

2004 | Gradual Decline

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Scrambling to sprawling, much-branched herb forming patches up to 2 m long. All parts covered in stinging hairs (these conspicuous but sparse on leaves). Leaves narrow, 40–100 × 4–10 mm, margins sharply toothed. Flowers green to reddish, clustered in short spikes in leaf axils.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand - and North and South Islands from the Central North Island south.

HABITAT

Fertile, lowland swamps, lakes and river margins, swampy shrubland and forest, often growing over tree stumps and rushes or through dense sedges such as swards of *Carex secta*.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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



Urtica perconfusa foliage. Photographer: Shannel Courtney, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Foliage. Photographer: Simon Moore, Licence: CC BY-SA.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Lianoid, slender, perennial, rhizomatous herb 0.45–2.0 m, usually much-branched, scrambling or climbing. Stem indumentum of few stinging hairs with pluricellular base c. 0.2–0.5 mm overall and erect setae 0.2–0.4 mm long and few simple trichomes 0.2–0.3 mm long. Leaf lamina 40–100 × 4–10 mm narrowly ovate; surface sparsely pubescent with short simple trichomes 0.2–0.5 mm long and few stinging hairs (abaxially only on the veins), adaxially with punctiform cystoliths; leaf base rounded; margins regularly dentate, rarely doubly dentate, with 12–20 teeth on each side; leaf apex acuminate; lamina thinly membranaceous; stipules free (4 per node) 2–4 mm long; petioles thin, flexuose, 15–45 mm long. Plants monoecious. Staminate flowers with tepals c. 1.3–1.8 mm long. Pistillate flowers with short tepals 0.5–0.8 mm long and long tepals 0.8–1.2 mm long, sparsely pubescent, setulose. Inflorescence glomerulous, 3–10 mm long, usually shorter than petioles. Mature fruit with longer tepals 1.2–1.5 mm long, achenes subcircular in outline, rounded at base and at the tip, laterally flattened, c. 1.2–2.0 × 0.8–1.3 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from all other New Zealand nettles (*Urtica*) by the vine-like (lianoid) stems, sprawling growth habit, narrowly ovate leaves with rounded bases and by the inflorescences which are glomerulose, and 3–10 mm long

FLOWERING

Flowering occurs throughout the year

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Red/Pink

FRUITING

Fruits may be found throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from rooted pieces, stem cuttings and fresh seed. Often spontaneously self-sows in cultivation.

THREATS

A sparsely distributed species of lowland to montane lake margins and fertile to semi-fertile wetlands. Easily overlooked because of its penchant for grow at the base of *Carex secta* trunks, or threaded through *Phormium tenax*. Being an adaptable species it is often found within willow (*Salix* spp.) car, sometimes as a low epiphyte on willow trunks. In all these habitats it is at risk from wetland clearance, drainage and also the spread of weeds such as wandering jew (*Tradescantia fluminensis*). Some large populations in the Horowhenua have been destroyed by the canalisation of streams and through willow control.

ETYMOLOGY

urtica: From the Latin verb urere which means “to burn”

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available. Some plants are held by specialist native plant growers and botanic gardens. An attractive plant but with a vicious sting! Will hybridise readily with *U. aspera* and *U. sykesii*. Such hybrids have been collected from the wild and in cultivation.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet by Peter J. de Lange (15 February 2016). Description based on Grosse-Veldmann et al. (2016).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Grosse-Veldmann, B.; Conn, B.J.; Weigend, M. 2016: Weeding the nettles IV: A redefinition of *Urtica incisa* and allies in New Zealand and Australia, including the segregation of two new species *Urtica sykesii* and *U. perconfusa*. *Phytotaxa* 245(4): 251–261.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/urtica-perconfusa/>