



Urtica aspera

Common Name(s):

None known

Current Threat Status (2012):

Naturally Uncommon

Distribution:

Endemic. South Island, eastern from Marlborough (upper Awatere and Clarence) south to Central Otago.

Habitat:

Usually montane to subalpine (>300 m a.s.l.) in short tussock grassland, grey scrub, often in and around boulders, rock tors, at the base of cliffs, on rock ledges or at the back of shallow rock overhangs. Sometimes at low altitudes in pasture or along river flats. This species seems to prefer dry sites to wet ones though it is very shade tolerant.

Features:

Stout, erect, suberect to trailing, tufted, some shaggy-looking, grey-green, pale green to yellow-green, dioecious herb up to 400 x 600 mm, woody at base, rhizomatous, widely spreading, often forming discrete clonal patches. All parts usually densely clad in shortly stalked, fine, stinging hairs (such that plants often appear to be fuzzed/shaggy due to sting density) sometimes markedly less so, otherwise sparsely hairy. Stipules 4 per node, up to 10 mm long, entire. Petioles 10-40(-60) mm long. Leaves 20-40(-60) x 10-40 mm, grey-green, green to yellow-green (very rarely dark green), broadly ovate, elliptic, rarely broadly lanceolate, subcordate, truncate to cuneate at base, obtusely to acutely serrated; teeth 5 mm, acute, sinus acute. Inflorescences axillary spikes up to 50 mm long, perianth-segments glabrate; staminate spikes usually widely-spaced, distant clusters, pistillate approximate. Perianth green, 4-partite, free at base, female flowers with perianths unequally divided, 2 largest enclosing achene, male flowers with 4 equal perianth segments, greenish-yellow. Achene 1-.5 mm, ellipsoid to ovoid, pale brown.

Flowering:

October - January

Fruiting:

November - May

Threats:

An apparently naturally widely distributed and biologically sparse species. No immediate threats are obvious though it has been recorded hybridising with other indigenous *Urtica* species. It is unclear whether it has undergone any decline though it has not been recorded from the northern part of its range for a very long time - though it may have been overlooked or confused with introduced nettle species.

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=339



Caption: *Urtica aspera*, Hawkdun Range

Photographer: John Barkla



Caption: *Urtica aspera* - Upper Manuherika Valley

Photographer: John Barkla