

Gunnera

Gunnera tinctoria

Family Gunneraceae

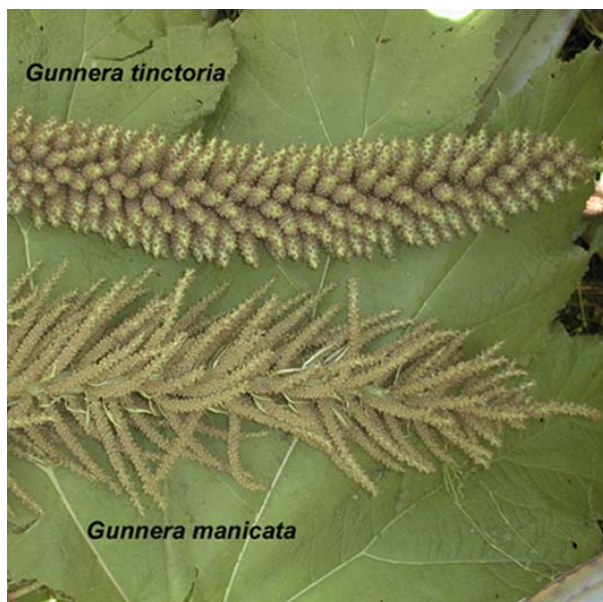


Identification

- Giant clump-forming plant
- Large rhubarb, umbrella-shaped leaves to 2.5 m high
- Large reddish prickles on leaf stalk
- Many small flowers (late October/early November) held on a distinctive cone-shaped flowerstalk
- Plants die back in winter to exposed clumps of roots.



Gunnera. Photo: C. Howell (DOC)



Gunnera flowerheads. C. Howell (DOC)

Where is it found?

Gunnera prefers to grow in moist places and will invade forests, waterways, roadsides, swamp margins, slips and coastal cliffs. It is a big problem on the coastal cliffs of Taranaki.

Why is it a problem?

Gunnera grows quickly, forming large clumps that shade out native plant species beneath it. Gunnera can also block and restrict access to waterways. A shade-tolerant plant, gunnera is easily spread by seed that can be carried to new places by birds and water. It is also spread by stem fragments.

Status

Gunnera tinctoria has been declared an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993, which makes it illegal to knowingly release or spread, display or sell, breed, propagate or otherwise distribute this species.

Similar species

Gunnera tinctoria looks very similar to *G. manicata*. *G. manicata* is not an unwanted organism. The easiest way to distinguish the two species is to look at the flowerheads (refer to above photo).



Gunnera. Photo: A. Paltridge (DOC)