

## *Sigesbeckia orientalis*

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There are several plants about which there has been argument as to whether they are native or introduced. One of these is Indian weed (*Sigesbeckia orientalis* L.), Fig.1, a composite herb of the tribe Heliantheae (Asteraceae). Allan (1961) described it as a native plant (but acknowledging it was doubtfully indigenous) on the basis that Solander collected it in New Zealand, Webb & Simpson (2001) included it in their account of seeds of New Zealand native plants but suggested it was probably an early Polynesian introduction, and Esler (1988) excluded it from his account of naturalised plants in Auckland. Webb, Sykes and Garnock-Jones (1988) and Sykes (1977) opted for treating it as being naturalised in both New Zealand and the Kermadec Islands and as almost certainly an early Polynesian introduction spread about by its viscid fruits sticking to hair or clothing. It is indeed a native plant of Africa and Asia, and introduced and naturalised in the Pacific, including New Zealand and presumably Australia though Harden (1992) treated it as a native of New South Wales. On Norfolk Island it is recorded as a naturalised weed of disturbed ground (Belcher & Green (1994); in Samoa it is known as aa'aa, and is recorded as a common weed in cultivated areas (Parham 1972). It is regarded as a weed in the Pacific Islands (Swarbrick 1997).

Its use as an anti-inflammatory herbal medicine has been documented. The Akha hill tribe of northern Thailand use the leaves and stems as a poultice for treating sores and wounds (Anderson 1993), and it is (or was) used in the same way in Polynesia (Whistler 1992).

In Auckland this plant is found in the western coastal district and adjoining Waitakere Ranges, with records from Whatipu, Te Henga (Bethells), Lake Waimanu, Te Matuku Reserve, Cannibal Creek (Anawhata), and the

Waitakere Ranges (Pukematekeo, Scenic Drive). It is an annual, growing at least 1 m tall. The leaves are arrow-head shaped. It has yellow flowers, appearing over summer, autumn, and winter until June. The flower bracts and seed heads are sticky. At the Forest & Bird Te Matuku Reserve, it can be found plentifully along the edges of a wide bush road. It is not a serious weed in Auckland, and is probably best regarded as an "honorary" native for conservation purposes. It does not seem to have a Maori name.

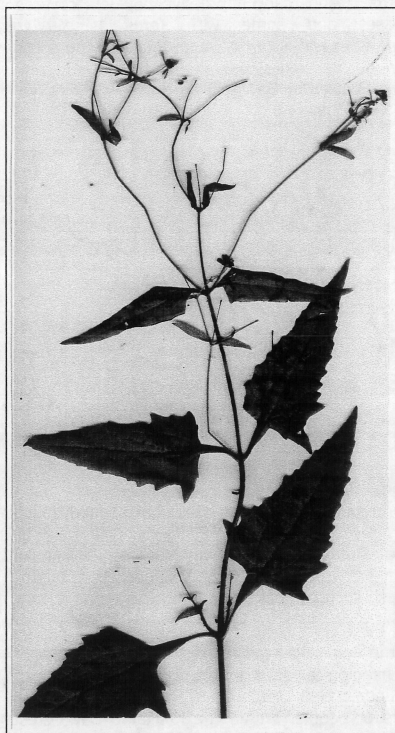


Fig.1: Indian weed  
*Sigesbeckia orientalis*

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