

Giant Rhubarb

(*Gunnera tinctoria*)

Habitat: Terrestrial. Found in sheltered areas where the ground is permanently moist, such as lake margins and stream sides.

Family name: Gunneraceae

Description:

A giant clump-forming perennial herb grows up to 3 metres in height and 4 metres wide.

The enormous leaves of the plant prevent other species from growing beneath them and colonies can suppress natural biodiversity and alter ecosystems.



During summer months, Giant Rhubarb bears tiny flowers on large cone inflorescences, up to 1.2 metres long, which are wind-pollinated.

Hundreds of densely packed small orange rounded, slightly fleshy fruits containing a single seed follow and mature in the autumn. Each plant can produce over 250,000 seeds per year.



Winter months:

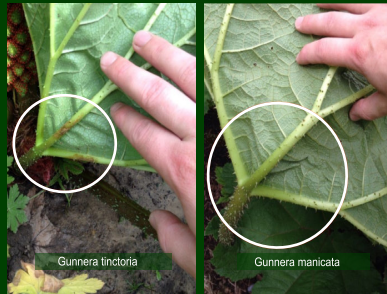
In winter, leaves die back to expose large over winter buds and thick brown scaly rhizomes which are capable of producing new plants and regenerating from fragments if detached from the parent.

It is not known how long detached pieces of rhizome can survive.



Identification:

Giant Rhubarb stalks and under-leaf have short, weak, bristles and spines



Unlike 'Brazilian Giant Rhubarb' (*Gunnera manicata*), 'Giant Rhubarb' (*Gunnera tinctoria*) can develop into extensive and dense stands of concentrated growth.

However, the plant has a symbiotic relationship with nitrogen-fixing cyanobacteria and this may confer an advantage to young plants growing in nitrogen-deficient soils.

There can often be confusion between true *Gunnera tinctoria* and other closely related species including *Gunnera morae* and *Gunnera manicata*.



Giant Rhubarb can block drains and streams, increasing the risk of local flooding.



It can be very difficult and costly to eradicate and become a economic burden to land-owners and management.

