

W.14 FLOATING HEART/DRYWENDE HART

(*Nymphoides indica* L. subsp. *occidentalis* A. Raynal)

Family: Gentianaceae

(Compiled by the Botanical Research Institute, Pretoria)

Floating heart is a rooted water plant with round floating leaves resembling those of a water lily. The leaves are yellowish-green, rather leathery and usually less than 250 mm across. Its hairy flowers are white with a yellow centre, about 25 to 30 mm across and have five petals. The flowers usually appear singly in the wedge-shaped incision of the leaf, but they are formed in dense clusters of 10 to 25 below water near the top of the stalk which bears the leaf. The small round fruit capsules contain many small seeds.

Related species

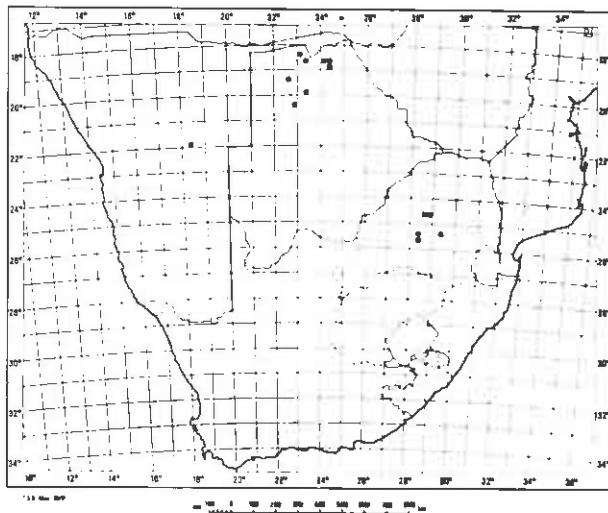
Four species of *Nymphoides* are known in Southern Africa. Floating heart can be

distinguished from the other three by its white flowers with a yellow centre and its firm, yellow-green leaves. *Nymphoides thunbergiana* (Griseb.) Kuntze is very similar to floating heart, but has pale yellow flowers. Floating heart is sometimes mistaken for a water lily. These, however, have softer and usually larger leaves and their flowers are much larger with many pale blue to pink or white petals.

Distribution

The plant is found in northern South West Africa/Namibia, Botswana and Transvaal and is wide-spread in tropical Africa including Angola, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe.





Ecology

Floating heart grows in still to slow-flowing water up to 3 m deep. It is found in sheltered areas in pans, dams and rivers where it is often seen together with water lilies (*Nymphaea* species) and certain species of pondweed (*Potamogeton*).

Importance

The species contributes to the silting up of

small dams and may interfere with boating and fishing. It grows less vigorously than the blue water lily and is thus less of a nuisance.

Legislation

There is no legislation for the control of floating heart.

Notes

Nymphoides means "looking like a *Nymphaea*" (water lily); *indica* = from India.

Species Number: 6545.000-00100.

Literature

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