

## Chameleon plant (*Houttuynia cordata*)



*Leaves are heart-shaped and vary in colour*

Chameleon plant is a perennial ground cover herb that can grow up to 1 m in height. Often cultivated in gardens, it can grow on forest floors and on the margins of freshwater lakes and ponds.

The plant is normally deciduous, dying back to the rootstock over winter, although it can be semi-evergreen in warm areas. The stems creep and spread from slender, couch-like rhizomes. The leaves are heart-shaped, usually variegated cream, bronze, scarlet and green, but may revert to a plain green colour, and have a peppery scent when crushed. From December to February small spikes of minute flowers appear, each flower with four white petal-like bracts at the base. The plant spreads by both seeds and rhizome fragments.

Plants can be controlled by digging up all stems and rhizomes and disposing of them safely. For large infestations, apply herbicide by spray or weed-wiper between spring and autumn.

**This plant is only found in gardens so far, but is believed to present a huge risk to the native habitats. Any sightings of this plant should be reported to your Regional Council who will provide advice on control methods.**