

Muehlenbeckia ephedroides

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Polygonaceae

AUTHORITY

Muehlenbeckia ephedroides Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

MUEEPH

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 20

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: PD, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: PD, Sp

2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (mainly eastern from Lake Taupo (Acacia Bay) and the northern Hawke's Bay south to Wellington and Cape Palliser), South Island (eastern from Marlborough to Southland).

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine (0–1200 m a.s.l.). A species of river flats, beaches, sand spits, alluvial fans, outwash gravels and river terraces, also found in grey scrub. Favouring open, dry, free draining but fertile sites, usually on gravel and sandy soils, in habitats naturally free from other taller plants. Sometimes found on gravel roads.



In cultivation ex Pencarrow. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 29/11/2001, Licence: CC BY.



In cult. ex Birdlings Flat. Sep 2008. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Gynodioecious, sprawling to prostrate, grey-green, grey to grey-black shrub forming dense, untidy mats up to 1.5 m or more diameter. **Stems** much branched, final branches c. 1 mm diameter, flexuous, striate, puberulent, grey to grey-black or grey-green. **Leaves** 5–25 mm long, dark to grey-green, narrow-linear, glabrous to glabrate, margins revolute, ascending, distant, spaced along constricted nodes, often sparse, deciduous, sometimes absent; ochreae 1–2 mm long, chartaceous, truncate. **Inflorescence** a few-flowered fascicle or raceme; pedicels 1–1.5 mm, pale, bracteate, slender. **Flowers** with pistillate on separate plants, and staminate and perfect on the same plant; if mainly male then raceme often lax, if female then fascicle dense, mixed male and perfect racemes more or less intermediate. **Tepals** 3–3.5 mm long, united about halfway, lobes narrow-triangular, white, greenish or pale yellow-green; stigmas frimbriate. **Fruit** 3 × 1.5 mm, trigonous, ovoid, lustrous black, tepals becoming swollen, white and succulent, or rarely chartaceous and dry.

SIMILAR TAXA

None. The near leafless, dark grey to grey-black, rush-like stems, untidy, sprawling mass of seemingly dead stick and twig like branches and stems are unique to this species.

FLOWERING

November–June

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

FRUITING

November–June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed, rooted pieces and semi-hardwood cuttings. An unusual plant that makes an excellent ground cover in sunny, free draining sites. Does not like much shade. Once established very drought tolerant. An intriguing plant that also makes a great pot plant.

THREATS

Most abundant within the north eastern South Island. It is highly threatened in the North Island and appears to be extinct around Lake Taupo. Small populations persist in Hawke's Bay, southern Wairarapa and south Wellington coastline. In the South Island it appears to have suffered little obvious decline but it is rarely common. In some areas its past presence can be determined by hybrid swarms that exist between it and other New Zealand *Muehlenbeckia* species.

ETYMOLOGY

muehlenbeckia: Named after a botanist named Muehlenbeck

ephedroides: Like ephedra, the horse-tail rush

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/muehlenbeckia-ephedroides/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/muehlenbeckia-ephedroides/>