

Adiantum capillus-veneris

COMMON NAMES

European maidenhair

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted, terrestrial fern. **Rhizome** short-creeping, suberect, branched, to 5 mm diameter; scales concolorous, yellow-brown, with entire margins. **Fronde**s tufted, to 360 mm long. **Stipe** to 180 mm long, glossy, glabrous, brittle. **Lamina** 50–200 × 40–150 mm, light green to yellow-green, 2–3-pinnate, deltoid, delicate, membranous. **Pinnae** rectangular or elliptic; rachis flexuous, wiry. **Pinnules** ovate to deltoid, shortly stalked throughout, symmetric and cuneate-flabellate or subdimidiate, glabrous; distal margins irregularly and deeply lobed, denticulate when sterile; stalks not articulated; veins red-brown near junction with stalk, otherwise pale. **Sori** 1–10 along distal margins, 1 or 2 per lobe; soral flaps oblong to subreniform, not or scarcely indented into lamina margin, glabrous. **Spores** 64 per sporangium pale brown; perine scabrous; largest diameter (43)–48.1–(60) µm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from the other *Adiantum* indigenous or naturalised in New Zealand by the ultimate segments flabellate, and stalked centrally, and by the reflexed oblong, entire (without notching) indusia.

DISTRIBUTION

Naturalised. New Zealand: North Island (Whangarei, Auckland, Hamilton, Bay of Plenty and Wellington).

HABITAT

Mostly urban in shaded sites on concrete and mortar or in wasteland on calcareous substrates. Often on shaded clay banks and overhangs—especially on limestone, calcareous sandstone and other marine sourced sedimentary rocks.

GENUS

Adiantum

FAMILY

Pteridaceae

AUTHORITY

Adiantum capillus-veneris L.

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No



Meola Creek, Auckland. December 2006.
Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Adiantum capillus-veneris. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

YEAR NATURALISED

1981

ORIGIN

subtropical and warm temperate regions

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown and widely cultivated through the warmer parts of New Zealand. Does best in a lime-enriched, damp soil in shaded conditions. Often self-establishes, especially on mortar within brick walls and around concrete steps.

CULTIVATION

Commonly available from most garden centres and nurseries.

ETYMOLOGY

adiantum: From the Greek a- 'without, lacking' and diantos 'moistened', the fronds of this fern are supposed to remain dry after submersion in water

capillus-veneris: From the Latin capillos 'hair' and Venus, the goddess of love, meaning Venus' hair

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Bostock PD. 1998. Adiantaceae. *Flora of Australia 48, Ferns Gymnosperms and allied groups*: 248–263. ABRS/CSIRO Victoria, Australia.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet Prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (Updated 9 March 2014). Description adapted from Bostock (1998).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/adiantum-capillus-veneris/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026