

Adiantum cunninghamii

COMMON NAMES

common maidenhair, Cunningham's maidenhair

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted, terrestrial fern. **Rhizomes**, short- to long-creeping. **Stipes and rachises** glabrous. **FronDs** adaxially dark green or glaucescent, abaxially paler, glaucous green, ovate to elliptic. **Lamina** 100–350 × 50–240 mm, 2–3-pinnate at base. **Ultimate segments** stalked to one side, oblong, tending to curve acroscopically at apices, upper margins irregularly toothed, lower margins smooth, glabrous. **Indusia** kidney-shaped, glabrous.

SIMILAR TAXA

Could be confused with *Adiantum fulvum*, and *A. viridescens*. From both it is immediately distinguished by the glabrous rather than hairy primary pinnae. However, in situations of uncertainty *A. fulvum* is easily distinguished by its glabrous rather than hairy ultimate segment undersides, and *A. viridescens* differs by the narrower often sickle-shaped, shiny, dark green, ultimate segments, and glabrous primary pinnae.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Kermadec Islands, Manawatāwhi / Three Kings Islands, North Island, South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands.

HABITAT

Common throughout in coastal and lowland forest, occasionally extending into upper montane forests. Usually found on banks, cliff faces and amongst boulders—especially on limestone, marble, basalt or andesite rocks.

GENUS

Adiantum

FAMILY

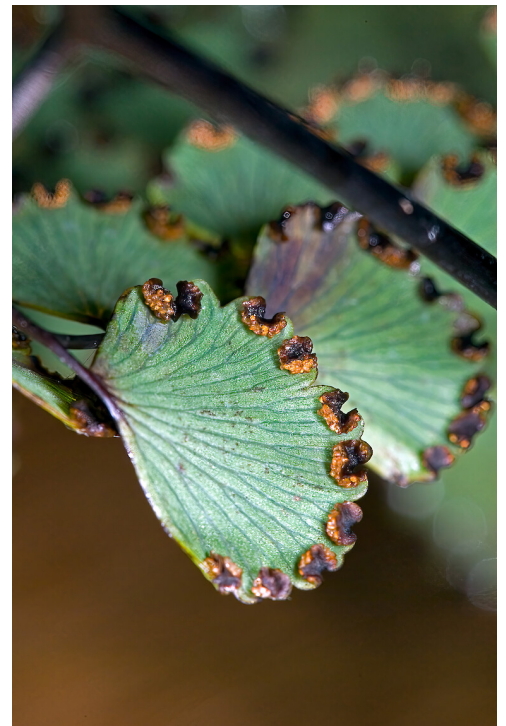
Pteridaceae

AUTHORITY

Adiantum cunninghamii Hook.



Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 03/09/2005, Licence: CC BY.



Sori. Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 07/08/2006, Licence: CC BY.

SYNONYMS

Adiantum formosum var. *cunninghamii* (Hook.) F.Muell.; *Adiantum trapeziforme* G.Forst.; *Adiantum affine* var. *chathamicum* Field; *Adiantum affine* var. *pullum* (Colenso) Domin; *Adiantum affine* sensu G.M. Thomson; *Adiantum formosum* sensu A.Rich.; *Adiantum pullum* Colenso

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Minute spores are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Slow but once established easy. Best grown from spores which must be sown fresh. Spores may take several years to produce plants.

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

cunninghamii: Named after Allan Cunningham (1791–1839) who was an English botanist and explorer, primarily known for his travels to Australia (New South Wales) and New Zealand to collect plants. Author of *Florae Insularum Novae Zelandiae Precursor*, 1837–40 (Introduction to the flora of New Zealand).

NVS CODE

ADICUN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 116

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland](#)" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025](#)" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Brownsey PJ, Smith–Dodsworth JC. 2000. *New Zealand Ferns and Allied Plants*. David Bateman, Auckland, NZ. 168 p.

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared for NZPCN by: P.J. de Lange (June 2005). Description adapted from Brownsey & Smith–Dodsworth (2000).

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

27 May 2026