

# Adiantum diaphanum

## COMMON NAMES

tuberous maidenhair, small maidenhair

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted, terrestrial fern. **Rhizomes** erect, c. 2 mm diameter; scales concolorous, golden brown, with entire margins and prominent apical seta. **Roots and rootlets** bearing ovoid proliferous tubers to c. 1.5 mm long. **Fronds** tufted, adaxially dark green, abaxially paler, to 360 mm long. **Stipe** to 180 mm long, smooth adaxially, scabrous abaxially. **Lamina** 20–170 × 20–130 mm, 1-pinnate, or 2–(3)-pinnate at the base and 1-pinnate above, subpedate, hastate or deltoid, membranous; rachises flexuous, glossy, glabrous. **Basal pinna**, when present, 1 or 2 (rarely more), narrowly deltoid, 1–2-pinnate. **Pinnules** dimidiate, rectangular to subtrapeziform, becoming cuneate-flabellate in apical segments, abaxially sparsely to very sparsely setose or glabrous, adaxially glabrous or setose hairy; distal margins shallowly lobed, denticulate when sterile; veins dark brown near stalk, otherwise pale. **Sori** 1–10 along distal margins, usually 1 per lobe; soral flaps round to subreniform, setose or glabrous, deeply immersed in the lobe. **Spores** c. 64 per sporangium, yellow, perine scabrous; largest diameter (25.6)–33.9–(51.9) µm.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished by the tuberous roots and rootlets, and small, sparingly divided frond. It can be confused with diminutive forms of *Adiantum hispidulum* with which it sometimes grows and from which it is reliably distinguished by the tuberous rootlets.

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: Kermadec (Raoul Island), North Island (common from Te Pahi to Waikato otherwise rather local), South Island (rather local reaching as far south as Dunedin), Chatham Islands. Also southern China, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam. Malesia, Australia, Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands and the wider Pacific.

## HABITAT

Coastal to lowland in closed or open forest. Often on clay banks, under overhangs, on rubble slopes or along rocky stream sides.

## GENUS

Adiantum

## FAMILY

Pteridaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Adiantum diaphanum* Blume



Under kahikatea and thick nikau understorey Hokianga, Far North. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 21/07/2020, Licence: CC BY.



Great Mercury Island. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## SYNONYMS

*Adiantum setulosum* J.Smith, *A. affine* Hook. non Willd., *A. polymorphum* Colenso, *A. diaphanum* var. *polymorphum* (Colenso) Cheeseman, *Adiantum tuberosum* Colenso

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a shady site planted in a light, well-drained soil.

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

## 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

**diaphanum:** From the Greek diaphanes, meaning transparent or filmy

## NVS CODE

ADIDIA

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 232

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

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 Data Deficient 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

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

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 (Updated 4 May 2011). Description adapted from Bostock (1998).

## MORE INFORMATION

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

**PDF DATE**

08 June 2026