

Alsophila colensoi

COMMON NAME

rough tree fern, mountain tree fern

SYNONYMS

Cyathea colensoi (Hook.f.) Domin

FAMILY

Cyatheaceae

AUTHORITY

Alsophila colensoi Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

NVS CODE

CYACOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 138

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Small tree fern with green-stalked roughish leaves to 1.5 m long. Trunk to 1m tall or not present. Leaf stems covered in small red and white star-shaped hairs, star-tipped scales and pointed scales (lens needed). Sporangia arranged in small round hairy clusters underneath fronds.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North, South and Stewart Islands from Mt Pirongia and the Kaimai Range south.

HABITAT

Montane to subalpine in dense forest, along stream courses, often near the bush line, sometimes extending into subalpine scrub.

FEATURES

Trunks prostrate, or erect (up to 1 m tall). Stipes slender, pale brown, finely rugose, bearing numerous scales. Scales pale brown to red-brown, lacking margin spines. Fronds up to 1.5 m long, held upright, 3-pinnate, soft; dead fronds falling (not persistent). Longest primary pinnae 150–400 mm long, adaxially hairy, abaxially covered in red stellate hairs and scales ending in single or stellate spines. Indusia absent; long hairs present amongst sporangia. Description adapted from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000).



Cyathea colensoi. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Cyathea colensoi. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

SIMILAR TAXA

Most often confused with young *Alsophila smithii* with which it sometimes grows but distinguished by its prostrate to shortly erect trunk, finely and copiously hairy upper frond surface, absence of an indusia, and by the long hairs protruding from the sorus.

FLOWERING

N.A.

FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

FRUITING

N.A

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult to grow and probably best left well alone. Some success has been had planting specimens into a rich, permanently damp soil within a shaded situation. Dislikes humidity and heat.

ETYMOLOGY

colensoi: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 22 March 2011. Description adapted from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Brownsey, P.J.; Smith-Dodsworth, J.C. 2000: New Zealand Ferns and Allied Plants. Auckland, David Bateman

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Alsophila colensoi* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alsophila-colensoi/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alsophila-colensoi/>