Apium prostratum subsp. prostratum var. filiforme

COMMON NAMES
New Zealand celery

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Cream, Yellow

Kennedy Bay. Photographer: Gillian M. Crowcroft, Licence: All rights reserved.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Perennial, glabrous, prostrate herb. Stems prostrate, sprawling, often ascending though surrounding vegetation, not rooting at nodes; 0.3-1.2 m long, up to 6 mm diam. Leaves dark green to yellow green, basal ones on long, slender petioles up to 500 mm (usually much less); pinnately 3-foliolate to 1-2-pinnate; segments ovate, obovate to cuneate, deeply incised and toothed; Leaves opposite compound umbels similar though with leaflets divided, elliptic, ovate, obovate or more or less cuneate, primary segments elliptic, ovate, obovate, or more or less cuneate in outline, with overall length 0.5-3x the greatest breadth, ultimate segments to tertiary order 8-74 per leaf. Inflorescences in compound umbels, sessile or pedunculate; peduncle usually present. 2-20 mm x 1-3 mm, usually ebracteate, sometimes one present present, this usually shedding early in umbel maturation. Rays 10-20, 0.4-8 mm long. Petals off-white to cream, with yellow-brown mid vein, ovate 0.75-1.5 x 0.5-1.0 mm, constricted at base, apex acute. Stamens about length of petals, filaments pale yellow to cream; anthers whitre or pale yellow, 0.3-0.4 x 0.3-0.4 mm. Ovary glabrous, stylopodium disciform; style 0.25-0.40 mm. Mericarps (1.5-)2.0-2.7 mm long, ovate to ovate-oblong, apex narrowed to persistent withered calyx teeth and style remnant, base broad and rounded to weakly cordate; ribs prominent, broad, rounded and spongy. Surface dull yellow to pale brown.

Waikanae Estuary. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 18/12/2008, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
Garden celery (Apium graveolens) is occasionally found wild and can look very similar. It is an erect, biennial herb with filiform ribs on the mericarps (fruits). Water celery (Apium nodiflorum (L.) Lagasca is a species of freshwater systems where it grows along drains, river, stream, lake and pond margins. Its umbels are always bracteolate, and the stems root freely at the nodes. The Chatham Island endemic A. prostratum subsp. denticulatum P.S.Short, differs by its allopatric distirbution, and by the leaves opposite the umbels up to 60 mm long; primary leaflets 3-5, leaflets or segments markedly denticulate with 6-36 secondary segments per leaflet only.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. In New Zealand known from the Kermadec, Three Kings, North, South, Stewart and Antipodes Islands. Also in eastern Australia as far north as Brisbane and along the whole coastline of southern Australia and Tasmania

HABITAT
Coastal and lowland. Very rarely montane. Common on rock ledges, boulder falls, cliff faces, within petrel scrub on damp seepages, in peaty turf, saltmarshes, within estuaries on mud banks, around brackish ponds, and lagoons. Also found in freshwater systems such as around lake and tarn sides, along streams and rivers and in wet hollows occasionally well inland, and sometimes at considerable elevations.

GENUS
Apium

FAMILY
Apiaceae

AUTHORITY
Apium prostratum subsp. prostratum var. filiforme (A.Rich.) Kirk

SYNONYMS
Petroselinum prostratum (Labill ex Vent.) DC., Helosciadium prostratum (Labill. ex Vent.) Bunge in Lehm., Petroselinum filiforme A.Rich., Apium filiforme (A.Rich.) Hook., Apium australe auct. non Pet.-Thou.

TAXONOMIC NOTES
New Zealand plants of Apium prostratum are extremely variable and at least one entity currently included within var. filiforme is apaprently unnamed. These plants are usually found on muddy ground within saltmarshes, in brackish ponds, and sometimes inland around lakes, stream and river sides. The variant has very slender leaves, often purplish petioles and distinct white piliferous to markedly apiculate leaf apices. It has long been known under the tag names White Denticles and Slender. It warrants more study.

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
August - March

FRUITING
September - July

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Corky mericarps are dispersed by water (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and whole plants. Being edible and pleasant tasting it could be more widely used as a substitute for celery (Apium graveolens L.).

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FAC: Facultative
Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
apium: The ancient Latin name for celery or parsley. Believed to be derived from the Celtic word apon ‘ditch’ and refers to the watery habitat of many species
prostratum: Prostrate
filiforme: From the Latin filum ‘thread’ and forma ‘shape’, meaning thread-shaped

NVS CODE
APIPVF

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 22

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 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
Johnson, A. T., Smith, H. A. (1972). Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning. Landsman Bookshop Ltd: Buckenhill, UK.
Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

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

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION
Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Apium prostratum subsp. prostratum var. filiforme Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/apium-prostratum-subsp-prostratum-var-filiforme/ (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/apium-prostratum-subsp-prostratum-var-filiforme/

PDF DATE
28 May 2026