

Asplenium bulbiferum

COMMON NAME

hen and chicken fern, pikopiko, mother spleenwort

SYNONYMS

Asplenium marinum var. *bulbifera* (G.Forst.) F.Muell.; *Caenopteris bulbifera* (G.Forst.) Desv.;

FAMILY

Aspleniaceae

AUTHORITY

Asplenium bulbiferum G. Forst.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

NVS CODE

ASPBUL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 144

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine. Usually in lowland forest where it is a common species of the ground-layer, especially in high rainfall areas. Commonly associated with riparian forest, and as a species of base-rich substrates. Frequently sympatric and so commonly forming hybrids with other asplenia. It is commonly sympatric with *A. gracillimum* Colenso.

FEATURES

Rhizome short, stout, erect, bearing ovate scales up to 15 × 5 mm. Stipes 50-300 mm long, brown on underside, green above, stout, covered in small brown ovate scales. Laminae lanceolate to elliptic, 0.15-1.20 m, 70-300 mm, bi- to tripinnate, sometimes bearing bulbils. Raches pale green to yellow-green, scaly, prominently grooved, usually bulbiferous. Pinnae 15-30 (or more) pairs, ovate to narrowly ovate, acuminate, shortly stalked, 30-200 × 10-50 mm, scaly on underside, basal pair pointing downwards when fresh. Secondary pinnae sessile or shortly stalked, very narrowly elliptic to ovate or elliptic, obtuse, deeply serrate or sometimes almost pinnate, decreasing in size from base to apex, basal acroscopic pinnule often enlarged (up to 40 × 10 mm). Ultimate pinnules narrowly oblong, ± entire to crenate-serrate, up to 10 mm long. Sori numerous, broad, submarginal, 2-4 mm long.



Sorus. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe



Waipoua. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

SIMILAR TAXA

Asplenium bulbiferum, the world famous Hen & Chicken fern is only ever likely to be confused with the closely related *A. gracillimum*. From that species it is distinguished by its usually bulbiferous; mostly pale green fronds and ovate stipe scales which lack long filiform apices. *Asplenium bulbiferum* is a tetraploid ($2n = 144$) and *A. gracillimum* an octoploid ($2n = 288$), so hybrids between these two species are sterile.

FLOWERING

Not applicable - spore producing

FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

FRUITING

Not applicable - spore producing

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown, and popular in cultivation. However, most plants sold as this species are the sterile hybrid *A. x lucrosum* Perrie et Brownsey (*A. bulbiferum* x *A. dimorphum* Kunze). An excellent pot plant but as with all asplenia prone to infestations of scale and mealy bugs.

ETYMOLOGY

asplenium: From the Greek a- 'without' and splene 'spleen', a northern hemisphere species, the black spleenwort (*Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*), was once believed to be a cure for diseases of the spleen.

bulbiferum: Bearing bulbils or bulbs

WHERE TO BUY

Commonly sold by many plant nurseries. However some plants sold as this species are in fact a sterile hybrid *A. x lucrosum* (*A. bulbiferum* x *A. dimorphum*).

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (3 February 2005). Description from: Brownsey (1977)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Brownsey, P.J. 1977: A taxonomic revision of the New Zealand species of *Asplenium*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 15: 39-86.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Asplenium bulbiferum* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/asplenium-bulbiferum/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/asplenium-bulbiferum/>