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.
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 lucedrosum 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 bulblils 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

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