

Asplenium hookerianum var. hookerianum

COMMON NAME

Hooker's spleenwort

SYNONYMS

Asplenium adiantoides Raoul; *Asplenium adiantoides* var. minus Hook f.; *Asplenium adiantoides* var. hookeriana Hook. f.; *Asplenium ornatum* Colenso; *Asplenium symmetricum* Colenso; *Asplenium hookerianum* Colenso

FAMILY

Aspleniaceae

AUTHORITY

Asplenium hookerianum Colenso var. *hookerianum*

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

NVS CODE

ASPHOO

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 144

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island (scarce north of Waikato), South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands. Present (but extremely uncommon) in Tasmania and south-eastern Australia.

HABITAT

Coastal to alpine. Usually on shaded clay banks or rocky outcrops in scrub and open forest, or on the ground in disturbed forest remnants.



Tongariro. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizome short, erect, bearing numerous brown, ovate, acuminate scales up to 10 × 2 mm. **Stipes** 20–100 mm long, pale brown below, green above, densely covered in small, subulate to narrowly ovate scales with filiform apices. **Laminae** lanceolate to rhombic, 40–250 × 10–150 mm, dark green, thin, normally bipinnate but often pinnate when young and almost tripinnate in well-grown specimens. **Rachis** green, slender, and very scaly. **Pinnae** 5–15 pairs, very narrowly ovate to ovate, obtuse to acuminate, long-stalked, 10–80 × 5–20 mm, basal pair pointing upwards when fresh. **Pinnules** stalked, 3–10 pairs, linear to suborbicular, crenate to deeply incised (or almost pinnate), 3–12 × 3–10 mm, tending to lie at 90° to plane of frond in well-grown specimens. **Sori** sub-marginal on narrow pinnules, remote from margins on broad segments, 1–3 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *Asplenium bulbiferum* G.Forst. from which it differs by the absence of bulbils. *Asplenium richardii* (Hook.f.) Hook.f. is somewhat similar but usually much larger, with a stouter stipe, and the ultimate segments are linear, mostly < 1 mm wide; and the pinnae and pinnules are crowded and overlapping. *Asplenium richardii* is scarce and exclusively alpine in the North Island, and more common at higher elevations of the drier, eastern South Island than *A. hookerianum*. *Asplenium hookerianum* is distinguished from other asplenias by the non-creeping, tufted, growth habit, dull rather than glossy, thin fronds which bear mostly < 15 pairs of 2–3–4-pinnate, with the pinnules distinctly held on slender stalks, and which are not broadened in region of sorus. The sori are mostly submarginal, or if remote from margin, then they are < 4 mm long. *Asplenium hookerianum* var. *colensoi* Colenso differs by its much narrower pinnules.

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown, and an excellent pot plant. However, rather slow growing, and as with all asplenias 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.

hookerianum: Named after Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker (born 1817) - a world famous botanist who travelled on the Antarctic expedition of 1839 under the command of Sir James Ross and wrote "Handbook of New Zealand Flora" published in 1864–67 describing many specimens sent to Kew by collectors. He died in 1911 and has a memorial stone at Westminster Abbey London.

WHERE TO BUY

Not Commercially available

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Brownsey (1977)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Brownsey PJ. 1977. A taxonomic revision of the New Zealand species of *Asplenium*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 15(1): 39–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1977.10429618>.

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>.

MORE INFORMATION

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