Asplenium hookerianum var. hookerianum

COMMON NAMES
Hooker's spleenwort

BIOSTATUS
Native

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Ferns

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. **Raches** 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 asplenia by the non-creeping, tufted, growth habit, dull rather than glossy, thin fronds which bear mostly < 15 pairs of 2–3–4-pinnae, 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.

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.

Silverstream Scenic Reserve, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 07/10/2006, Licence: CC BY.

(left) var. colensoi; (right) var. hookerianum. Stronvar, eastern Wairarpa. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 10/10/2010, Licence: CC BY.

GENUS
Asplenium

FAMILY
Aspleniaceae

AUTHORITY
Asplenium hookerianum Colenso var. hookerianum

SYNONYMS
Asplenium adiantoides Raoul; Asplenium adiantoides var. minus Hook f.; Asplenium adiantoides var. hookeriana Hook. f.; Asplenium ornatum Colenso; Asplenium svmmetricum Colenso; Asplenium hookerianum Colenso

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
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 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.
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.

NVS CODE
ASPHOO

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 144

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DE, DPS, DPT, Sp, TO 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

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.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Brownsey (1977)

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 June 2026