Asplenium polyodon

COMMON NAMES
sickle spleenwort

BIOSTATUS
Native

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Ferns

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Rhizome stout, short creeping, densely covered in red-brown, narrowly triangular scales up to 10 × 1 mm. **Stipes** 100–300 mm long, dark brown, stiff, densely covered in scales similar to but smaller than those of the rhizome. **Laminae** lanceolate, 250–500 (or more) × 100–200 mm, dark green and glossy above, paler and dull below, frequently pendulous, pinnate. **Raches** dark chocolate brown, very scaly. **Pinnae** 25 (or more) pairs, narrowly angular-ovate to ovate, sometimes with a large rounded basal acroscopic lobe, acuminate, doubly serrate, 50–100 × 10–20 mm, scaly and with prominent veins on underside. **Sori** often slightly curved away from the midrib, up to 2 mm long.

Abaxial surface, showing dark brown rachis, Longwood Ecological District, Southland. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 05/07/2018, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Asplenium polyodon. Photographer: Wayne Bennett, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Recognised by the simply pinnate frond which are > 30 mm wide; by the dark chocolate brown rachis; and by the pinnae irregularly and doubly serrate.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. New Zealand: Kermadec Islands, Manawatāwhi / Three Kings Islands, North Island, South Island (mainly western, in the east found as far south as Bull Creek on the coast south of Dunedin), Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands. Also Madagascar, Indo-Malaysian, Australia, and the Pacific Islands.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane. In scrub and dense forest, often as an epiphyte but also on rock outcrops, fallen logs and on the ground.

GENUS
Asplenium

FAMILY
Aspleniaceae

AUTHORITY
Asplenium polyodon G.Forst.

SYNONYMS
Asplenium falcatum Lam.; Asplenium adiantoides var. polyodon (G.Forst.) C.Chr.; Asplenium falcatum var. caudatum sensu Allan; Tarachia falcata (Lam.) C.Presl; Tarachia polyodon (G.Forst.) C.Presl; Trichomanes adiantoides L.; Asplenium forsterianum Colenso; Tarachia adiantoides (L.) Nakai ex Tuyama; Asplenium adiantoides (L.) C.Chr.; Asplenium caudatum sensu Hook.f.; Asplenium falcatum sensu A.Rich.

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Minute spores are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Rather slow growing but a very attractive species which is excellent in a pot, on a shaded rock wall, or planted in a free draining, moist, fertile soil under tall trees.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
UPL: Obligate Upland
Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands (non-wetlands).

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.

NVS CODE
ASPPOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 144

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, DPT 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 At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, Sp 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 from: Brownsey (1977).

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/asplenium-polyodon/

PDF DATE

25 May 2026