Asplenium subglandulosum

COMMON NAMES
blanket fern

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, CI, DPS, DPT, SO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Ferns

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Reddish-green to red-brown hairy fern of dry or exposed rock crevices. **Rhizomes** short, erect, ascending, covered in scales. **Stipes and rachises** pale chesnut-brown to dark red-brown at base, green above, copiously invested in pale brown to red-brown, 0.1–2 mm long, non-glandular hairs. Stipe 5–70 × 0.5 mm diameter. **Frond lamina** 1–2-pinnate, narrowly elliptic, 15–150 x 6–45 mm, dark brownish-green to brown-green, densely covered in pale brown non-glandular hairs. **Primary pinnae** in 3–11 pairs, flabellate, ovate or bluntly and broadly ovate; bases oblique to unequally cuneate, shortly stalked; margins dentate or more or less entire; apices obtuse or more or less rounded; longest pinnae near middle of frond, these 3–23 × 3–22 mm, divided into secondary pinnae; these up to 10 × 9 mm. Sori ≤ 5 mm long.

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Alexandra. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
This species could not be confused with any other New Zealand fern. Its preference for exposed, dry rock faces and crevices, usually devoid of other vascular plants, the small tufted habit, and the almost velvety textured, brownish-green, 1–2-pinnate fronds copiously covered in reddish to red-brown non-glandular hairs are key characters enabling its immediate recognition in the field and herbarium.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. North Island (inland Hawke's Bay (an old record), the north-west Ruahine Ranges, near Cape Palliser, and possibly also Cape Terawhiti), South Island (more widespread in the east from Marlborough south to Otago). Also Australia.

HABITAT
Coastal to subalpine (1–1400 m.a.s.l.), saxicolous, usually on dry, exposed and sunny rock faces or crevices and joints with little (if any) associated vascular plant cover.

THREATS
A genuinely uncommon, naturally sparse fern. Although widespread it is easily overlooked and it is possible that some populations have been eliminated by quarrying. Because it is unusual, it is susceptible to overcollection by botanists, a factor which has threatened some populations in the recent past. It is quite likely that some populations are threatened by the spread of introduced weeds into its preferred cliff habitats. Nevertheless it would seem that these threats have had little impact on the species' overall distribution. Populations of this species should be carefully monitored to determine their long-term stability.

GENUS
Asplenium

FAMILY
Aspleniaceae

AUTHORITY
Asplenium subglandulosum (Hook. et Grev.) Salvo, Prada

SYNONYMS
Gymnogramma alpina Potts; Gymnogramma rutaefolia (R.Br.) Desv.; Gymnogramma pozoi var. rutaefolia (R.Br.) Hook. et Baker; Ceterach rutaefolium (R.Br.) Mett.; Grammitis rutaefolia R.Br., Asplenium subglandulosum (Hook. et Grev.) Salvo, Prada et Diaz subsp. subglandulosum; Pleurosorus rutifolius (R.Br.) Fée

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Difficult - should not be removed from the wild

PLANT OF THE MONTH
This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for March 2014 for the full story.

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
ASPSUB

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 144

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, SO, Sp
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: SO, Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: SO
2004 | Sparse
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NR, NStr, PF, RR, 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, Smith-Dodsworth JC. 2000. New Zealand Ferns and Allied Plants. David Bateman, Auckland, NZ. 168 p.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact Sheet Prepared for NZPCN by: P.J. de Lange (17 April 2011). Description adapted from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026