

Austroblechnum colensoi

COMMON NAMES

Colenso's hard fern, peretao, petako

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout fern of damp, shaded places, producing numerous cartilaginous to coriaceous fronds up to 1 m long (usually much less). **Rhizomes** short-creeping, scaly. **Sterile frond stipes** 60–400 mm long, base covered in dark red-black to black scales, laminae narrow elliptic, elliptic to almost rhomboid, undivided, 100–350–(800) × 25–600 mm, dark green to glaucous green above, paler beneath, cartilaginous or coriaceous. **Sterile pinnae** 1–10-paired, 100–200–(800) × 20–40–(80) mm, of similar size except for basal pairs which are reduced to margin flanges, apices tapering, margins smooth, glabrous, bases decurrent. **Fertile fronds** similar to sterile in stature, extremely slender, the terminal pinnae distinctly larger than the rest.

SIMILAR TAXA

Austroblechnum colensoi has no close relatives in New Zealand, being most similar to *A. patersonii* of Australia, with which it was once included. It is easily recognised by the dark glaucous green to very dark green sparingly and broadly divided fronds, which are a marked contrast to the very slender fertile fronds

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (from Warawara Forest south), South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands, Auckland Islands.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. Usually within seepages on shaded steep banks, rock overhangs and fringing river gorges; also on sodden ground within cloud forest

THREATS

Not Threatened but very uncommon north of Auckland

GENUS

Austroblechnum

FAMILY

Blechnaceae

AUTHORITY

Austroblechnum colensoi (Hook.f.) Gasper et V.A.O.Dittrich



Abaxial frond surface, Hokonui Hills, Southland. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 01/02/2017, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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

SYNONYMS

Blechnum patersonii (R.Br.) Mett. sensu Allan 1961; *Lomaria patersonii* R.Br. var. *elongata* sensu Cheeseman; *Lomaria heterophylla* Colenso; *Blechnum patersonii* var. *elongatum* (Blume) Domin; *Lomaria colensoi* Hook.f. in Hook.; *Blechnum colensoi* (Hook. f.) N.A. Wakef.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Perrie et al. (2014) advocated for a broadened circumscription of Blechnaceae whereby a number of genera traditionally recognised as distinct from *Blechnum* were merged within it. However, this view has not met with universal acceptance (see de Gasper et al. 2016) and does not seem to be followed worldwide (PPG 2016). From a New Zealand perspective the decision to merge *Doodia* in *Blechnum*, and rejection of *Diploblechnum* has not been universally accepted either e.g., Wilcox & Warden (2017), and as such it is considered appropriate to follow world opinion and accept the taxonomy of de Gasper et al. (2016) and recommendations of the PPG (2016). See also the comments by Pyner (2017).

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Very slow growing. Requires heavily shaded, cool conditions, in permanently moist soil. Will not tolerate drying out.

ETYMOLOGY

colensoi: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

NVS CODE

BLECOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 122

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 Endangered | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, PF, RR, Sp 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

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- Gaspar AL, de Oliveira Dittrich VA, Smith AR, Salino A. 2016. A classification for Blechnaceae (Polypodiales: Polypodiopsida): New genera, resurrected names, and combinations. *Phytotaxa* 275: 191–227. <https://doi.org/10.11646/phytotaxa.275.3.1>.
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- PPG 1: The Pteridophyte Phylogeny Group 2016. A community-derived classification for extant lycophytes and ferns. *Journal of Systematics and Evolution* 54: 563–603. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jse.12229>.
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- Wilcox M, Warden J. 2017. Botany of Hillsborough coast bush reserves, Manukau Harbour, Auckland. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 72: 32–46.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet by P.J. de Lange 7 March 2006. Description based on Brownsey and Dodsworth (2000) supplemented with observations made from herbarium specimens

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/austroblechnum-colensoi/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/austroblechnum-colensoi/>

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