

Austroblechnum norfolkianum

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: TO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted fern. **Rhizomes** stout, erect. Covered in old stipe ends. **Stipes** of sterile fronds 50–150 mm long, scaly at base. **Sterile laminae** narrowly elliptic, pinnate, 350–900 × 90–180 mm, dark green to bright green, never red-tinged. somewhat fleshy, upper surfaces shining, glabrous. **Sterile pinnae** in 35–60 pairs, longest at the middle, 50–90 × 8–18 mm, falcate and tapering to acute apices, gradually reducing to short flanges at base, margins finely toothed, bases adnate. **Fertile fronds** only slightly shorter than sterile.

SIMILAR TAXA

Most often confused with *Austroblechnum lanceolatum*, from which it is most reliably distinguished by its dark green to bright green, somewhat fleshy fronds, which are never red or pink-tinged, by the distinctly sickle-shaped (falcate) pinnules and much shorter fertile fronds (these are usually half the length of the sterile fronds). In New Zealand *A. norfolkianum* is an offshore island species, usually found in or near petrel burrows in deeply shaded forest or in rocky sites within overhangs and damp recesses.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. Common on Raoul Island (Kermadec Island group) and Manawatāwhi / Three Kings Islands, otherwise uncommon and sparingly distributed on mainly offshore islands from the Cavallis south to Mayor Island / Tuhua. Known on the Chatham Islands from South East Island (Rangatira). Also on Norfolk Island where it is now seriously at risk of extinction.

HABITAT

Strictly Coastal. This species is most frequently seen on the outer Hauraki Gulf offshore islands, and on the more remote Manawatāwhi / Three Kings Islands and Kermadec Islands. It favours shaded sites, usually in or near petrel colonies, or near penguin trails and nests.

THREATS

Not threatened in New Zealand, although close to extinction on Norfolk Island. In New Zealand it has a primarily northern offshore island distribution, and is by and large uncommon except on the Kermadec Islands and Manawatāwhi / Three Kings Islands.

GENUS

Austroblechnum



Great Mercury Island. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Cultivated ex Great Mercury Island. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FAMILY

Blechnaceae

AUTHORITY

Austroblechnum norfolkianum (Heward) Gasper et V.A.O.Dittrich

SYNONYMS

Lomaria norfolkiana Heward, *Blechnum lanceolatum* var. *norfolkianum* (Heward) Laing, *Blechnum norfolkianum* (Heward) Maiden nom. superf., nom. illeg., *Lomaria acuminata* Baker nom. illeg. non Desv. (1811), nec C.Presl. (1825), *Spicanta acuminata* (Baker) Kuntze, nom. illeg., *Blechnum acuminatum* (Baker) Maiden nom. illeg. non Fée (1852), nec Sturm (1853); *Lomaria attenuata* sensu Hook.f.; *Blechnum norfolkianum* (Heward) C.Chr.

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 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 Gasper et al. (2016) and recommendations of the PPG (2016). See also the comments by Pyner (2017).

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Not applicable—spore producing

FRUITING

Not applicable—spore producing

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh spores. Does best in a sheltered spot planted within free draining, fertile, moist soil. Responds well to frequent mulching with partially rotted leaf litter.

NVS CODE

BLENOR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.66

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: TO

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: TO

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: TO

2004 | Sparse

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, PF, RR, 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.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Brownsey PJ, Smith-Dodsworth JC. 2000. New Zealand Ferns and Allied Plants. David Bateman, Auckland, NZ. 168 p.
- 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>.
- Perrie LR, Wilson RK, Shepherd LD, Ohlsen DJ, Batty EL, Brownsey PJ, Bayly MJ. 2014. Molecular phylogenetics and generic taxonomy of Blechnaceae ferns. *Taxon* 63(4): 745–758. <https://doi.org/10.12705/634.13>.
- 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>.
- Pyner T. 2017. A new classification of *Blechnum*. British Pteridological Society. <https://ebps.org.uk/new-classification-blechnum/>. Accessed [INSERT DATE ACCESSED].
- 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 6 June 2005. Description from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Austroblechnum norfolkianum* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/austroblechnum-norfolkianum/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026