Austroblechnum penna-marina subsp. alpina

COMMON NAMES
little hard fern, alpine hard fern

BIOSTATUS
Native

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Ferns

FLOWER COLOURS
No flowers

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Rhizome creeping. **Fronds** dimorphic, 40–120 × 6–12 mm. **Stipe** 15–200 mm long, dark red-brown at base, usually becoming stramineous towards lamina; scales somewhat bullate, linear to ovate, entire, red-brown. **Lamina** lanceolate, pinnate, with 4–34 pairs of pinnae; rachis and costae stramineous; scales mainly on lower surface, small, sparse, acuminate, entire, brown to red-brown; sterile pinnae oblong-obtuse or somewhat triangular, 3.5–8.0 × 2.0–4.2 mm, adnate with broad bases, contiguous; margins entire; basal pinnae shorter, rounder; fertile pinnae linear and somewhat falcate, 3.6–6.8 × 1.0–2.5 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA
None. Easily recognised by the small size, narrow sterile fronds; erect, narrow fertile fronds, and extensively creeping, turf-forming habit.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island (scarce north of the Bay of Plenty and Waikato), South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands, Antipodes Islands, Auckland Islands and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku. Also Macaquarie Island, Australia, South America and several other circum-Antarctic islands.

HABITAT
Coastal to alpine (mostly montane to alpine in the northern part of range) in open forest, subalpine scrub, grassland, alpine herbfield, turf (including coastal turf) and in moss field on the shaded sites of rock outcrops.

GENUS
Austroblechnum

FAMILY
Blechnaceae

AUTHORITY
Austroblechnum penna-marina subsp. alpina (R.Br.) A.R.Field



Craigieburn, Canterbury. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 29/04/2011, Licence: CC BY-NC-SA.



Craigieburn, Canterbury. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 09/01/2012, Licence: CC BY-NC-SA.

SYNONYMS
Struthiopteris distans (Colenso) Ching; Lomaria pumila Raoul; Spicanta pumila (Raoul) Kuntze; Stegania alpina R.Br.; Lomaria distans Colenso; Lomaria linearis Colenso; Lomaria parvifolia Colenso; Blechnum hillii C.Chr.; Blechnum parvifolium (Colenso) C.Chr.; Lomaria alpina (R.Br.) Spreng.; Blechnum alpinum (R.Br.) Mett.; Blechnum penna-marina subsp. alpina (R.Br.) T.C.Chambers et P.A.Farrant

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Perrie et al. (2014) advocated for a broadened circumscription of Blechnaceae whereby a number of genera traditionally recognized 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
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
N.A.

FRUITING
N.A.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from spores and by the dviison of established plants. Does well in shade or the open but prefers a damp soil. An excellent ground cover fern.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FAC: Facultative
Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
penna-marina: Sea-pen; from the Latin penna and marinus, like the polyp ‘sea-pen’
alpina: From the Latin alpes ‘the Alps’, refers to plants growing in mountainous areas

NVS CODE
BLEPEN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 66

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 Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, SO Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The 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
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.
Northland: 2026 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau" Ford et al. 2026 report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Chambers TC, Farrant PA. 1998. Blechnaceae. Flora of Australia 48, Ferns Gymnosperms and allied groups: 359–384. ABRS/CSIRO Victoria, Australia.
Gasper 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 prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (19 September 2012). Description adapted from Chambers & Farrant (1998)

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/austroblechnum-penna-marina-subsp-alpina/

PDF DATE

25 August 2026