

Bulbinella gibbsii var. balanifera

COMMON NAMES

Māori onion

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Subdioecious, diminutive, summer green, fleshy, lily up to 600 mm tall. **Leaves** up to 30 mm wide, strap-like, reddish green to dark green, fleshy. **Peduncle** mostly shorter than raceme, often exceeding leaves. **Raceme** mostly conical (rarely cylindric), the axis visible between flowers. **Pedicels** 10–20 mm long, swollen below flower, elongating slightly after anthesis. **Bracts** shortly-acuminate, notably shorter than pedicel in flowering and fruiting material. **Flowers** 10–14 mm diameter, dark yellow, numerous, densely crowded; tepals patent, becoming erect and hardening as fruit matures. **Stamens** 6, < tepals; anthers mostly well filled with pollen. **Ovary** barrel-shaped, scarcely stipitate. **Capsules** barrel-shaped. **Seeds** dark and narrowly winged.

SIMILAR TAXA

Bulbinella gibbsii Cockayne var. *gibbsii* is a smaller plant than var. *balanifera* with shorter peduncles and pedicels. The subtending bracts greatly exceed the pedicels. The ovary and capsules are broadly ovoid rather than barrel-shaped, and are not slightly stipitate. *Bulbinella gibbsii* var. *gibbsii* is confined to Stewart Island/Rakiura.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island and South Island. In the North Island known from the southern Ruahine and Tararua Ranges. In the South Island known from the ranges about Arthur's Pass south to Fiordland.

HABITAT

Alpine in free draining, open habitats such as tussock grassland, the bases of talus slopes and in herbfield. Rarely in subalpine scrub.

GENUS

Bulbinella

FAMILY

Asphodelaceae

AUTHORITY

Bulbinella gibbsii var. *balanifera* L.B.Moore

SYNONYMS

None



Upper Hollyford, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Gertrude Valley. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January–February

FRUITING

February–June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult–should not be removed from the wild. Has been cultivated with limited success in the more southerly parts of the country.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ETYMOLOGY

bulbinella: Little bulb

gibbsii: Named in honor of Frederick G Gibbs (1866-1953)

NVS CODE

BULBAL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 14

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NS, 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

Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Description modified from: Moore & Edgar (1970).

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/bulbinella-gibbsii-var-balanifera/>

