Bulbinella modesta

SYNONYMS
None

FAMILY
Asphodelaceae

AUTHORITY
Bulbinella modesta L.B.Moore

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Monocots

NVS CODE
BULMOD

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 14

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2018 | At Risk – Declining

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP
2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. South Island, West Coast. Known from scattered sites in lowland habitats south of Westport to about Okarito.

HABITAT
Lowland pakihi and associated swamp forest.

FEATURES
Summer green herb. Plants very slender, < or = 300 mm. Leaves bright green, < 10 mm wide, flaccid, linear-lanceolate, gradually tapering to a subacute apex. Inflorescence a somewhat short and broad raceme, bearing scattered, well spaced flowers borne on a slender, often twisted peduncle, this often decurved to procumbent. Flowers pedicellate, pedicels long, spreading, often recurved at apex. Individual flowers star-like, with yellow 9.5-13 mm, perianths. These long persistent, as shrivelled remnants pendant from the base of the ripening capsules. Capsules globose, 4-5-5 mm diameter. Seeds 3.5-4 mm long, brown, smooth and rounded without wings.
A rather distinct species unlikely to be confused with any of the other New Zealand Bulbinella species. Perhaps closest to B. talbotii L.B.Moore from which it is easily distinguished by the taller flower head with openly (laxly) arranged flowers. Some people believe it is very close to if not the same as B. hookeri (Hook.) Cheeseman. However, although quite variable this species can be immediately distinguished by its obovoid capsules, containing elongated, narrowly winged almost black seeds.

FLOWERING
December - January

FLOWER COLOURS
Yellow

FRUITING
December - March

LIFE CYCLE
Seeds are dispersed by wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and division of whole plants. Prefers damp ground, with little (if any) competition from taller plants.

THREATS
As a lowland species of alluvial forest, pakihi, and back swamps, this species has become vulnerable to forest logging and wetland drainage, and populations have declined through the spread of introduced wetland weeds such as Juncus bulbosus and J. squarrosus. However, recent surveys (2004, 2005) have found numerous populations comprising many hundreds of plants. The overall impression is that this species has probably increased its range due to human modification of forested systems, thereby creating more Pakihi wetlands, and that any decline is more likely to be the result of natural succession rather than any human induced threat.

ETYMOLOGY
bulbinella: Little bulb
modesta: Mild or modest

WHERE TO BUY
Not commercially available but plants are held by several Botanic Gardens and specialist growers

ATTRIBUTION
Description modified from Moore and Edgar (1970)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

MORE INFORMATION