

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

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, RR, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (West Coast—scattered sites in lowland habitats south of Westport to about Okarito).

HABITAT

Lowland pakihi and associated swamp forest.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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 pendent 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.



SIMILAR TAXA

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 pākihi 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

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

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/bulbinella-modesta/>