

Celmisia Iyallii

COMMON NAMES

false Spaniard

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted rigid herb with short pseudo-stem arising from us. simple stock. Leaves rigid, coriaceous, narrow-ensiform tapering regularly to pungent apex; lamina 20-60 × 6-9 mm; upper surface glabrous, very finely striate to smooth; lower surface strongly grooved, densely clad in thin appressed white satiny tomentum to almost glabrous (in different plants); margins slightly recurved, entire. Sheath abruptly widened from somewhat constricted lamina-base, 30-80 × 10-15 mm, thin, grooved, clad in appressed white satiny tomentum. Scape 15-36 mm long, rather slender, white with ± floccose tomentum, ± concealed by bract-sheaths. Bracts numerous, crowded; lowest leaf-like, to 60 cmm long, diminishing in size toward scape apex, uppermost c.10 mm long, forming a pseudo-involucre. Capitula 25-50 mm diameter; involucre bracts linear-subulate, rigid, indurated, ± 20 mm long, midrib prominent. Ray-florets very slender, 12-14 mm long, white; limb hardly wider than tube, 4-toothed. Disk-florets 6-7 mm long, tubular, lobes triangular. Achenes 2-3 mm long, compressed-cylindric, strongly grooved; hairs minute, stiff, very minutely barbellate

SIMILAR TAXA

The dry land equivalent of *Celmisia armstrongii* and *C. petriei*. From *Celmisia petriei* it is distinguished by the very rigid, narrow leaves with pungent apices, the leaf has only a single prominent midrib rather than a stout, parallel pair of veins either side of an obscure central midrib. from *Celmisia armstrongii*, *C. Iyallii* differs by its very pungent (sharp tipped leaves). and by the absence of a broad yellow band either side of the midrib on the upper leaf surface.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island: widespread in drier sites so found mainly east of the main divide.

HABITAT

Montane to subalpine open grassland, herbfield, fellfield

GENUS

Celmisia

FAMILY

Asteraceae



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AUTHORITY

Celmisia lyallii Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November - February

FRUITING

December - April

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Pappate cypselae are dispersed by wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a shaded site, planted within a permanently moist, free draining, acidic soil. Dislikes humidity and will not tolerate drying out. Best grown from fresh seed which should be sown immediately or stratified in a fridge or freezer for 1-3 months

CULTIVATION

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

ETYMOLOGY

celmisia: Apparently named after Kelmis, one of Idaean Dactyls, a group of skilled mythical beings associated with the Mother Goddess Rhea in Greek mythology. Kelmis, whose name means 'casting', was a blacksmith and childhood friend of Zeus, son of Rhea and later king of the gods. In Ovid's 'Metamorphoses', Kelmis is described as offending Zeus who turned him into adamant so he was as hard as a tempered blade

lyallii: Named after David Lyall (1817-1895), 19th century Scottish naturalist and surgeon with the Royal Navy, who explored Antarctica, New Zealand, the Arctic and North America and was a lifelong friend of Sir Joseph Hooker.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to *Celmisia* in New Zealand](#)

NVS CODE

CELLYA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 108

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: TL 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

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from: Allan, H.H. 1961: *Flora of New Zealand*. Vol. I, Government Printer, Wellington

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/celmisia-lyallii/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026