

Celmisia spectabilis subsp. spectabilis

COMMON NAMES

Common mountain daisy, cotton plant

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

Woody-based herb forming mats or cushions 0.2-1.0 m diameter; with branchlets arising from a usually hidden simple or multicapital stock. Living leaves in rosettes at the tips of branchlets, the whole forming a cushion or mat. Leaf sheaths densely imbricate and compacted, forming a pseudostem. Leaf lamina 30-180 × 3-30 mm, (ratio of length to width 3.7-11); coriaceous, usually lanceolate-oblong to narrowly ovate; upper surface shining and sulcate: lower surface densely covered in soft felted pale buff to brown tomentum, midrib distinct; tip acute; margins entire and recurved, occasionally minutely toothed, with the lamina base distinctly angled; sheath green to deep purple. Petiole thin with evident veins. Scape densely clad in floccose white hairs, stout, up to 300 mm long, bracteate, monocephalous. Corolla of disc florets mostly glabrous, rarely hairy. Ray florets 40-100, ligulate, white. Disc florets 60-200, 5-9 mm long, funneliform: tube glabrous or with scattered uniseriate or biseriate hairs. Achene fusiform cylindric, grooved, 1.5-6.5 mm long, usually glabrous. Pappus hairs 5-9 mm long, barbellate.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from *Celmisia spectabilis* subsp. *lanceolata* by the broader shorter leaves (70-240 × 9-30 mm cf. 30-180 × 3-30 mm in subsp. *spectabilis*), pale buff to brown rather than almost white tomentum, and angled rather than attenuate leaf base. The sheath of subsp. *lanceolata* is greenish rather than green to deep purple, and the achenes usually sparsely in hairs rather than mostly glabrous (a feature of subsp. *spectabilis*). *Celmisia spectabilis* subsp. *lanceolata* is allopatric from subsp. *spectabilis* being known only from the eastern and northern Wairarapa. From subsp. *magnifica*, subsp. *spectabilis* differs by the broader and shorter leaves (70-290 × 10-45 mm cf. 30-180 × 3-30 mm in subsp. *spectabilis*); and by the cuneate to cuneate-truncate lamina base. *Celmisia spectabilis* subsp. *magnifica* occurs to the south of the range of subsp. *spectabilis* from the Big Ben Range and Acheron Valley just north of Rakaia River, south to the Hunters Hills and Mount Studholme.



Rangipo, Tongariro National Park.

Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Craigieburn Skifield, Canterbury. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands: In the North Island from the Raukumara Range; South through the central volcanoes, Kaimanawa Mountains; Kaweka Range; north-west Ruahine Range and Tararua Range. In the South Island present in north-west Nelson and from northern Marlborough south to Rakaia River and Mathias River, Canterbury.

HABITAT

Alpine and subalpine grassland and herbfield rocky sites

GENUS

Celmisia

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Celmisia spectabilis Hook.f. subsp. *spectabilis*

SYNONYMS

Celmisia spectabilis var. *angustifolia* W. Martin; *Celmisia spectabilis* var. *albomarginata* W. Martin; *Celmisia ruahinensis* Colenso

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October - February

FRUITING

November - May

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. *Celmisia spectabilis* is one of the few *Celmisia* that is easily grown in most climates though it dislikes high humidity. Best grown in a moist, free draining soil, within some afternoon shade. Because it is highly variable some selection of wild forms suited to garden growing conditions is needed.

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

spectabilis: Notable

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

CELSSP

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 108

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Given, D.R. 1984: A taxonomic revision of *Celmisia* subgenus *Pelliculatae* section *Petiolatae* (Compositae—Astereae). *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 22: 139-158.

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* 11: 285-309

ATTRIBUTION

Description based on Given (1984)

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026