

Celmisia verbascifolia subsp. verbascifolia

SYNONYMS

Celmisia petiolata Hook. f.; *Celmisia brownii* Chapman

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Celmisia verbascifolia Hook.f. subsp. *verbascifolia*

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 108

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island: from about Amuri Pass south along and west of main divide to Fiordland; Also in scattered localities east of the main divide especially in central Canterbury.

HABITAT

A plant of high rainfall areas. In areas of ≥ 2500 mm rainfall it is commonly found in open herbfield and grassland but on mountains with less precipitation it is almost confined to cool south-facing, constantly moist sites such as shaded rocky slopes and the sides of gorges



Hooker valley, December. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Ahuriri Valley. Photographer: John Barkla

FEATURES

Woody-based herb with short branchlets arising from a multicapital stock, usually just below the soil surface; living leaves in few to numerous rosettes at the tips of branchlets; the whole plant forming a loose mat of rosettes. Leaf sheaths densely imbricate and compacted into a pseudostem. Leaf lamina up to 300 × 12-70 mm, usually coriaceous though often flaccidly so, leaves usually at first erect, becoming decumbent with age, elliptic, oblong, or occasionally obovate; upper surface sometimes obscurely sulcate, concolorous, pale to mid-green, glabrate or densely yellow-tomentose when young but hairs usually deciduous; lower surface dull, densely covered in a tomentum of cream to buff hairs, veins obscure; tip acute; margins entire, flat, with a very narrow rim of hairs slightly darker than those of lower surface; base obliquely cuneate to rounded, occasionally truncate; petiole short, up to about 2/3 lamina length, green to purple, clad in floccose, whitish hairs. Scape purple, clad in whitish tomentum, up to 400 mm long; bracts numerous, erect, linear sometimes leaf-like; monocephalous. Capitula up to 60 mm diameter. Involucral bracts cream, tomentum, in several series, linear-subulate, erect, glabrate to silky tomentose. Ray florets 70-80, ligulate, the limb linear-lanceolate, white. Disc florets c. 130-170, funneliform, yellow; tube with eglandular, biseriate hairs. Achene fusiform-cylindric, ribbed, 4-5 mm long, glabrous or with scattered bifid hairs. Pappus unequal, c.6 mm long, of c. 20-30 bristles.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from other allied *Celmisia* –except *C. rigida* by the large coriaceous to submembranous leaves, whose upper surface is often glabrate but whose leaf margins are consistently fringed with buff coloured hairs. The tomentum of the leaf undersides is distinctly appressed and dull. *Celmisia rigida* differs by the rigidly coriaceous leaves whose margins are fringed in dark brownish coloured hairs, by the distinct rather than inconspicuous leaf veins and by the leaf undersides which are finely covered in appressed, cream-coloured lustrous hairs. *Celmisia verbascifolia* subsp. *membranacea* differs from subsp. *verbascifolia* by the submembranous, rather than coriaceous leaves with rounded to truncate bases, and by the glabrate involucral bracts.

FLOWERING

November - January

FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

FRUITING

December - March

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed but difficult to maintain. Dislikes high humidity. Best in a shaded site planted in a moist free draining soil.

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

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION

Description based on Given (1984)

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

MORE INFORMATION

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