

# Celmisia vespertina

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

## FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Woody-based perennial herb arising from a multicapital stock. Leaf lamina linear, rigid but recurved, 50-150 × 3-5 mm; upper surface grooved, dark green, clad in a thick pellicle which becomes golden on drying; lower surface clad in thick appressed white tomentum, midrib prominent; margins entire, often revolute. Sheath 30-60 mm long, membranous, yellow-orange and clad in a thin pellicle. Scape 100-150 mm × 2-3 mm, bracts few. Involucral bracts erect, linear-oblong to subulate, acute, up to 12 mm long, inner narrower than outer; margins fringed with long white hairs, particularly near the base; surface almost glabrous; venation simple. Receptacle obconic, upper surface alveolate. Ray florets up to 20 mm long, limb linear and glabrous, tube narrow with a few eglandular hairs near top. In disc florets, corolla tube gradually narrowed from apex to base, glabrous or sparsely hairy with long biseriate hairs; stamen tip acute, anther tails short; style bifid, the arms differentiated into a lower parallel-sided papillose portion and an upper short-triangular portion bearing short collecting hairs. Pappus bristles unequal, up to 4 mm long, with closely spaced short teeth. Achene 2.0-3.0 × 0.5 mm, fusiform, compressed, strongly ribbed and clad in bifid hairs.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Could be confused with *Celmisia insignis* a Marlborough endemic from which it differs its smaller achenes that are covered in bifid hairs rather than glabrous, by its shorter pappus, by the disc florets which have fewer corolla hairs and by its shorter, darker green and more distinctly grooved leaves. In addition, *Celmisia insignis* lacks the distinctive pellicle characterising dried specimens of *C. vespertina*. The species is similar to *C. petriei* and *C. polyvena* from both of which it differs by its intermediate size and leaf and by its distinctive pellicle and sheath colour.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island: Mostly west of the Main Divide of the Southern Alps, from near the Taramakau Valley southwards to near Mount Aspiring. Otherwise known in the east only from the Ben Ohau Range

## HABITAT

Alpine grassland and associated fell field

## GENUS

*Celmisia*



Birch Hill Stream, Mt Cook, January.  
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Seeding, Mungo River upper valley, West Coast. Photographer: Dave Toole, Date taken: 04/01/2021, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## FAMILY

Asteraceae

## AUTHORITY

Celmisia vespertina Given

## SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1969)

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

December - February

## FRUITING

January - March

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Unknown.

## 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

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to Celmisia in New Zealand](#)

## NVS CODE

CELVES

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 108

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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

Given, D.R. 1969: Taxonomic notes on the genus *Celmisia* (Compositae). *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 7: 389-399.

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 (1969)

## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

07 June 2026