

Centipeda aotearoana

COMMON NAMES

New Zealand sneezewort

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Annual to short-lived perennial prostrate herb forming circular patches 10-30 cm diameter. Stems trailing, prostrate, sparsely to moderately covered in cottony-hairs. Leaves yellow-green, obovate to spatulate in outline, 4-8(-12) mm long, 1.5-4 mm wide, margins with 1-3 acute to blunt teeth, rarely entire. Inflorescence a single leaf-opposed, unstalked hemispherical, capitula (daisy-like structure), domed, 3-4(-7) mm diameter, female (outer) florets c.60-120 in 3-5 rows, bisexual flowers 8-16. Fruiting heads persistent. Cypselas (seeds) brown, club-shaped or narrowly cylindrical, 1.2-1.7 mm long, 4-angled with prominent ribs at each of the angles, smooth or finely scabrid in lower portion, glandular hairs sparse or absent, non-glandular hairs spreading or subappressed, confined to ribs.

SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *C. elatinoidea* (Less.) Benth. et Hook. and *C. cunninghamii* (DC.) A.Braun et Asch. *Centipeda elatinoidea* differs by its hairless or slightly cob-webbed branchlets, shortly stalked capitula, and narrowly obovate cypselas with rounded apices. *Centipeda cunninghamii* differs by its erect growth form, leaves longer than 10 mm, and by possessing 20 or more bisexual florets in the capitula. *C. aotearoana* can be immediately distinguished by its hemispherical fruiting capitula.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand, Three Kings, North and South Islands.

HABITAT

Open damp ground, lake, tarn and river margins, ephemeral wetlands, and drains.

THREATS

Centipeda aotearoana was described by Australian Botanist Neville Walsh in 2001. At the time of its description the comment was made that this species does not appear to be rare. Current indications are that *C. aotearoana* is probably a naturally sparse, opportunistic species.

GENUS

Centipeda

FAMILY

Asteraceae



Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 01/04/2021, Licence: CC BY-NC.



L. Waiporohita, Oct. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Centipeda aotearoana N.G.Walsh

SYNONYMS

None

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Collectively the four species now recognised from New Zealand were all regarded by Allan (1961) as *C. orbicularis*, a later synonym of *C. minima*. Webb et al. (1988) were the first to recognise *C. minima* and *C. cunninghamii* as present in New Zealand.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Herbarium specimens and field notes indicate it may flower from mid summer through to autumn but plants may continue flowering into winter.

FRUITING

Herbarium specimens suggest that fruit is produced in late summer to autumn.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Cypselae dispersed by wind, attachment and granivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces and fresh seed.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

centipeda: From the Greek word for one hundred feet

aotearoana: From the Maori name for New Zealand (although originally the name only referred to the North Island). Derived from the Maori ao 'cloud, daytime, world' and tea 'white' and roa 'long', usually translated as 'land of the long white cloud', a reference to the appearance of the island from the sea.

NVS CODE

CENAOT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 20

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Data Deficient

Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, EF, RR Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the “Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland” Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPT, NR, OL 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

Deverson, T., Kennedy G. 2005: *The New Zealand Oxford Dictionary*. Oxford University Press: Victoria.

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.

Walsh, N.G. 2001: A revision of *Centipeda* (Asteraceae). *Muelleria* 15: 33-64.

Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. (eds). 1988: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. IV. Christchurch, Botany Division, D.S.I.R. 1365 pp.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (5 May 2005). Description adapted from Walsh (2001).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/centipeda-aotearoana/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026