

# Centipeda cunninghamii

## COMMON NAMES

sneezeweed

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Red/Pink

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect or ascending perennial (sometimes when stressed annual) up to 300 mm tall, new growth commonly resprouting from base, glabrous or cottony. Leaves 7.0-30 x 2.5-7.0 mm, yellow-green or green, somewhat glaucescent, concolorous (rarely paler below); lamina oblong or narrowly obovate, serrate, glabrous, resin-dotted on both surfaces. Inflorescence a single sessile, cauline, capitulum, not leaf-opposed, often in branch axils. Capitula at anthesis biconvex, hemispherical or subglobular, 4-8 mm diameter; involucre bracts 3-5-seriate, obovate, 1.5-3.0 mm long, entire or with minutely ruminant membranous margins, glabrous to lightly (rarely densely) cottony; receptacle strongly convex; female (outer) florets c.200-350 in 7-12 rows, corollas narrowly cylindrical 0.3-0.7 mm long (including lobes 0.1 mm long); bisexual florets 20-70, corollas funnelform, 0.7-0.8 mm long (including lobes 0.3 x 0.3 mm), pale green, rarely reddish. Fruiting heads usually remaining intact until stems senesce; bracts of fruiting heads widely spreading; fruiting receptacle 1.8-3.5 mm diameter with a pith layer entirely contained within the dome of the receptacle; cypselas 1.2-2.0 mm long, oblong, apex truncate or rounded; body with 4 prominent ribs, occasionally with 1-2 minor ribs, the ribs smooth or scabridulous, united at or above 3/4 of the cypselas length into a thickened, spongy or corky apical portion, the pericarp between the ribs in the lower part thin with the brown testa of the seed apparent; vesicular trichomes scattered over faces of cypselas between the ribs. Hairs on ribs antrorse to antrorse-appressed, 0.1-0.2 mm long, usually tightly inrolled at their apices.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *C. elatinoidea* and *C. aotearoana*. *Centipeda elatinoidea* differs by its hairless or slightly cob-webbed branchlets, shortly stalked capitula, and narrowly obovate cypselas with rounded apices. *Centipeda aotearoana* differs by its mostly prostrate, widely spreading growth form, leaves up to 12 mm long, 8-17 rather than 20 or more bisexual florets in the capitula, and smaller (0.9-1.3 mm cf. 1.8-3.5 mm) fruiting capitula.

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North and South Islands.

Also present in Australia and New Caledonia.



Capitulum. Lake Waikato, near Waverley, Taranaki. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Lake Waikato, near Waverley, Taranaki. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## HABITAT

Coastal to montane (up to 600 m a.s.l.). Especially common in muddy/silty ground left by receding waters along lake, pond, stream and river margins. Also in muddy hollows within rough pasture, paddocks, tussock grassland, in damp depressions within dune swales and sometimes in similar sites within urban areas.

## GENUS

Centipeda

## FAMILY

Asteraceae

## AUTHORITY

*Centipeda cunninghamii* (DC.) A.Braun & Asch.

## SYNONYMS

*Myriogyne cunninghamii* DC.

## 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. However they regarded *C. cunninghamii* as introduced. NZPCN does not because it is just as likely it was introduced naturally to New Zealand by waterfowl.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

September - February

## FRUITING

October - June

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and cuttings. Inclined to become invasive.

## 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

**cunninghamii:** Named after Allan Cunningham (1791–1839) who was an English botanist and explorer, primarily known for his travels to Australia (New South Wales) and New Zealand to collect plants. Author of *Florae Insularum Novae Zelandiae Praecursor*, 1837–40 (Introduction to the flora of New Zealand).

## NVS CODE

CENCUN

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 20

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT 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.

## 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* 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-cunninghamii/>

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026