Centipeda cunninghamii

COMMON NAME
Sneezeweed

SYNONYMS
Myriogyne cunninghamii DC.

FAMILY
Asteraceae

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

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Dicotyledonous Herbs - Composites

NVS CODE
CENCUN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 20

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. North and South Islands. Also present in Australia and New Caledonia

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
FEATURES
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; involucral bracts 3-5-seriate, obovate, 1.5-3.0 mm long, entire or with minutely ruminate 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 cypsela 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 antorse to antorse-appressed, 0.1-0.2 mm long, usually tightly inrolled at their apices.

SIMILAR TAXA
Most likely to be confused with C. elatinoides, and C. aotearoana. C. elatinoides 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.

FLOWERING
September - February

FLOWER COLOURS
Green, Red/Pink

FRUITING
October - June

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

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

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 Precursor, 1837-40 (Introduction to the flora of New Zealand).

NOTES ON TAXONOMY
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 water fowl.

ATTRIBUTION