

Chaerophyllum colensoi var. delicatulum

COMMON NAMES

myrrh

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: CD, DPR, DPT, EF, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Diminutive, shortly rhizomatous, perennial herb arising from stout tap root, plants forming circular mats up to 50 x 50 mm (usually much less). Petioles filiform, brown-green, yellow-green to white, 10-20 mm long. Leaves radical, spreading up to 20 mm long, dark green, red-green to brown-green 1(-2) pinnate with 4-6(8) distant pairs of primary pinnae. Both leaf surfaces sparsely covered in fine hairs, lamina margin particularly so, pinnae of equal length, or broader toward middle and decreasing in length toward distal and proximal ends, linear, narrowly lanceolate to lanceolate, apex narrowly acute, deeply toothed, entire, or with prominent secondary pinnae in the basal 1-3 primary pinnae pairs. Peduncles 1-5(-15), filiform, stout or slender up to 30 mm long, decumbent to sub-erect, spreading. Involucre of 5-8 ovate-oblong bracts; bracts up to 5 mm long, pale green to yellow-green, entire. Pedicels at flowering subsessile, elongating in fruit up to 6 mm. Flowers 3-8, 1.5-2 mm diameter. Petals 3-5, 0.3-0.5 x 0.3-0.5 mm, ovate, cream. Mericarps 1.5-2 x 0.6-1.3 mm, narrow-ovate to ovate, glabrous. Ribs 3-5.

SIMILAR TAXA

Chaerophyllum colensoi var. *delicatulum* differs from other members of the *C. colensoi* complex by its smaller size, narrower, less divided leaves, narrower, sharply pointed pinnae (leaflets), and generally by the hairless fruits. However, the distinction is not always clear and intermediates are common in some parts of the country.

DISTRIBUTION

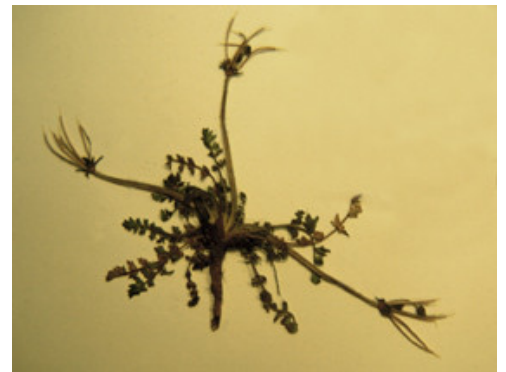
Endemic to New Zealand, where it is found in the North and South Islands, from the Hauhangaroa Range to Southland. It has a mainly easterly distribution in the South Island.

HABITAT

A plant of ephemeral wetlands, subalpine flushes, and tarn margins. Strictly subalpine in the North Island but descending to lower montane habitats in the South Island.



Close up of *Oreomyrrhis colensoi* var. *delicatula*. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Oreomyrrhis colensoi var. *delicatula* specimen. Photographer: Cathy Jones, Licence: CC BY.

THREATS

The open wetland turf and tarn margin habitats frequented by *O. colensoi* var. *delicatula* are extremely vulnerable to invasion by faster growing and taller weeds. In many parts of the North Island this species has gone extinct because of weed competition. *O. colensoi* var. *delicatula*, along with many other wetland marginal turf plants is also extremely vulnerable to changes in the hydrology of the wetlands they require. In many places these are now drying out too early, because of changes in adjacent land use management, so increasing their vulnerability to weed species invading and becoming permanently established.

GENUS

Chaerophyllum

FAMILY

Apiaceae

AUTHORITY

Chaerophyllum colensoi var. delicatulum (Allan) K.F.Chung

SYNONYMS

Oreomyrrhis colensoi var. delicatula Allan

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Oreomyrrhis colensoi is extremely variable throughout its range. Some botanists regard *O. colensoi* var. *delicatula* of dubious status seeing it as part of the natural variation exhibited by *O. colensoi*. Further study using modern taxonomic techniques and molecular markers is needed.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October - February

FRUITING

December - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and division of whole plants. Difficult to maintain for any length of time. Plants are best grown in a permanently moist soil, within a pot in full sun. Will not tolerate competition from taller plants.

ETYMOLOGY

chaerophyllum: From the Greek chairo 'to please' and phyllon 'leaf'

colensoi: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

NVS CODE

CHACVD

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 14

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP, EF, RR

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DP

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NS, RR 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

Allan, H.H. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Wellington, Government Printer.
Chung, K-F. 2007. Inclusion of the South Pacific alpine genus *Oreomyrrhis* (Apiaceae) in *Chaerophyllum* based on nuclear and chloroplast DNA sequences. *Systematic Botany* 32(3): 671-681.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (31 August 2006). Description based on Allan (1961) supplemented with observations taken from herbarium material.

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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/chaerophyllum-colensoi-var-delicatulum/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/chaerophyllum-colensoi-var-delicatulum/>

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