

# Cheilanthes distans

## COMMON NAMES

woolly cloak fern, woolly rock fern

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

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## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rupestrial (rarely terrestrial) fern. **Fron**ds up to 350 × 30 mm; stipe red-brown or dark brown, with moderately dense to dense covering of brown scales and some hairs, rachis densely covered in scales. **Lamina** linear, 2-pinnate or 2-pinnatifid at base and for most of length; large pinnae triangular-ovate; pinnules oblong-elliptic; margins entire or lobed; adaxially sparsely to moderately densely covered with slender, white hairs and occasional caducous scales, very rarely glabrous; abaxially sparsely to densely covered in scales and sparse white hairs. **Spores** spherical, granulose and ridged, with echinate ornamentation, 43–79 µm diameter, 16 per sporangium.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from *Cheilanthes sieberi* subsp. *sieberi* with which it often grows by the the stipes, rachises and primary pinnae being copiously covered in scales and hairs rather than glabrous (or nearly so).

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: Kermadec Islands (Macauley Island). Manawatāwhi / Three Kings Islands, North Island, South Island (mainly easterly south to Banks Peninsula). Also Australia and New Caledonia.

## HABITAT

Coastal to montane in dry, rocky habitats with only sparse or no vegetation cover. Often found growing with *Asplenium flabellifolium*, *Cheilanthes sieberi* subsp. *sieberi* and *Pellaea calidrupium*. More common in the drier eastern parts of the country.

## GENUS

Cheilanthes

## FAMILY

Pteridaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Cheilanthes distans* (R.Br.) Mett.

## SYNONYMS

*Notholaena distans* R.Br.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No



Kennedy Bay, October. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Mangatoetoe Stream, Aorangi Forest Park. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 02/10/2010, Licence: CC BY.

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Minute spores are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a dry sunny site. An excellent pot plant. In ideal conditions it soon self establishes.

## ETYMOLOGY

**cheilanthes**: From the Greek kheilos 'lip' and anthos 'flower', referring to the indusium

**distans**: Distant (widely spaced female flowers)

## NVS CODE

CHEDIS

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 116

## 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 At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPT, RR, SO 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

Chambers TC, Farrant PA. 1998. *Cheilanthes*. [Flora of Australia 48, Ferns Gymnosperms and allied groups](#): 271–286. ABRS/CSIRO Victoria, Australia.

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11*: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (Updated 3 May 2011). Adapted from Chambers & Farrant (1998)

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/cheilanthes-distans/>

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026