

Dicksonia fibrosa

COMMON NAMES

wheki-ponga, wheki-kohoonga, golden tree fern, kuripaka

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Stout tree fern up to 10 m tall. Trunk solitary, dense, made of red-brown interwoven rootlets, Fronds forming dense crown, dying and leaving a tidy, persistent skirt beneath crown.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout, non-rhizomatous tree ferns, up to 10 m tall. **Trunk** up to 1 m diameter, very dense, composed of tightly interwoven, red-brown rootlets, entirely without aerial buds. **Fronds** numerous, persistent in death, and forming a dense, pendent skirt; in life erect and arching, forming a dense, tight crown 1.2–2.8–3.6 m long, 300–480–(600) mm wide. **Stipes** 100–(300) mm long, pale brown to red-brown (sometimes golden-brown), smooth, base densely clad with persistent, soft, light red-brown hairs; immature rachises initially clad in soft, pale brown hairs, otherwise glabrate. **Lamina** (0.9)–2.5–3.3 m long, lanceolate, (2)–3–4-pinnate, abaxially glossy dark green, adaxially paler, harshly coriaceous, primary pinnae 150–280–(300) mm long, lanceolate, long tapering, ± acuminate; secondary pinnae 40–50 mm long, lanceolate, close-set to ± overlapping. **Barren pinnules** 5 mm long, subfalcate, acute, toothed or entire, widened and confluent at base, shallowly concavo-convex; fertile pinnules rounded, concavo-convex lobes. **Sorus** ± ovoid to rounded, terminating veins at fertile pinnae margins; sporangia on raised receptacle, partially obscured by in rolled pinnae margin, and submembranous inner indusium. **Spores** golden brown to red-brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

Dicksonia fibrosa is easily recognised by its non-rhizomatous tree fern growth habit; dense, stout trunk (reaching up to 1 m diameter) and comprised of thickly interwoven red-brown rootlets, and never bearing aerial buds; by the smooth stipes; and by the dead fronds forming a dense, pendent, persistent tidy skirt.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island (uncommon north of the Waikato River and Coromandel Peninsula), South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane, Usually in forested situations, often in riparian sites or at gully heads.



Waikanae River. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 27/04/1984, Licence: CC BY.



Eastern Wairarapa. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 02/10/2010, Licence: CC BY.

GENUS

Dicksonia

FAMILY

Dicksoniaceae

AUTHORITY

Dicksonia fibrosa Colenso

SYNONYMS

Dicksonia sparmanniana Colenso; Dicksonia antarctica var. fibrosa (Colenso) Kirk; Dicksonia fibrosa var. microcarpa (Colenso) C.Chr.; Balantium fibrosum (Colenso) Fée; Dicksonia antarctica sensu Hook.f.; Dicksonia microcarpa Colenso

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Very closely allied to the Australian Dicksonia antarctica R.Br.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh spores, and also by transplants of mature trunked specimens. A beautiful but slow-growing species that does best in cooler climates, in a damp, humus-enriched soil.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

UPL: Obligate Upland

Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION

Commonly available from most mainline and specialist native plant nurseries.

ETYMOLOGY

dicksonia: After James Dickson (1738-1822), British botanist and nurseryman

fibrosa: Fibrous, from the Latin fibra; matted fibrous trunk

NVS CODE

DICFIB

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 130

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

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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.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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

Duguid F. 1978. Annual growth of new fronds on *Dicksonia fibrosa*. Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin 40: 48–49.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (10 October 2010). Description by P.J. de Lange

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/dicksonia-fibrosa/>

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