

# Diphasium scariosum

## COMMON NAMES

creeping clubmoss

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lycophytes (clubmosses, selaginella, quillworts)

## FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Main stems prostrate, creeping to 1 m or more long, with scattered appressed scale-like leaves. **Branchlets** spreading to ascending (up to 0.5 m tall), dorsiventral, much-branched. **Sterile leaves** dimorphic, yellowish-green; upper leaves in 2 alternating rows flattened in 1 plane, firm to rigid, decurrent, 3–5 mm long × 1.0–1.5 mm wide ovate to lanceolate often falcate; leaves of undersurface in 2 rows, up to 0.2 mm long, scale-like, with translucent membranous obtuse usually dilated tips. **Strobili** erect, terminal, 10–50 mm long, orange-brown, mostly solitary, rarely paired. **Sporophylls** imbricate, subpeltate, ovate-saggitate, stramineous, with translucent membranous tips. (Description adapted from Chinnock (1998) and Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000)).

## SIMILAR TAXA

The yellow-green colour, flattened leaves and mostly solitary, stalked strobili serve to distinguish this species from all other representatives of the family in New Zealand. *Diphasium scariosum* is perhaps most similar to reduced states of *Pseudodiphasium volubile* from which it differs by the smaller stem and branch leaves being confined to the lower surface of stems and by the erect, solitary (rarely paired) rather than clustered and pendulous strobili.

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island (from near Mangamuka south but scarce in Northland), South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands, Antipodes Islands, Auckland Islands, Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku. Also Australia, Philippines, Borneo and New Guinea.

## HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine (mostly montane in the northern North island). A species of open habitats such as mossy roadside banks, stream banks, shrubland, and peaty ground (rarely restiad bog).

## GENUS

Diphasium

## FAMILY

Lycopodiaceae



Northern Remutaka Range. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 10/01/2004, Licence: CC BY.



Taranua Forest Park. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 19/06/2005, Licence: CC BY.

## AUTHORITY

*Diphasium scariosum* (G.Forst.) Rothm.

## SYNONYMS

*Lycopodium scariosum* G.Forst.; *Lycopodium scariosum* var. *decurrens* (R.Br.) Hook.; *Lycopodium distans* Colenso; *Lycopodium lessonianum* A.Rich.; *Stachygyndrum scariosum* (G.Forst.) P.Beauv.; *Diphasium decurrens* (R.Br.) Holub; *Lycopodium decurrens* R.Br.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

N.A.

## FRUITING

N.A.

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild.

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

## ETYMOLOGY

**scariosum**: Thin and dry; from the Latin *scariosus*; general appearance

## NVS CODE

LYCSCA

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 60$

## 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.

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

Brownsey PJ, Smith-Dodsworth JC. 2000. *New Zealand Ferns and Allied Plants*. David Bateman, Auckland, NZ. 168 p.

Chinnock RJ. 1998. Lycopodiaceae. *Flora of Australia 48, Ferns Gymnosperms and allied groups*: 66–85. ABRS/CSIRO Victoria, Australia.

**ATTRIBUTION**

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 20 March 2011. Description adapted from Chinnock (1998) and Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000).

**MORE INFORMATION**

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/diphasium-scariosum/>

**PDF DATE**

27 May 2026