Drosera pygmaea

COMMON NAMES
pygmy sundew

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, SO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Diminutive, annual to biennial, dark red, bright green or yellow-green plants forming rosettes 5–20 mm diameter. **Gemma** 40–70 per plant, 0.7–0.8 × 0.6 mm, reniform, flattened, dark red or green; appearing February–June. **Leaves** 6–12, radical; stipules 1.1–5.0 × 0.5–0.9 mm, attached to base of upper petiole surface, laciniate, hyaline to silvery-white, trifid, central lobe cut 2–3 times, lateral lobes 2-pointed; petiole 3–6 × 0.4–0.5 mm, linear, narrowing towards lamina, glabrous; lamina 1.5–2.0 × 2.0–2.6 mm, subpeltate, peltate, suborbicular to orbicular, dark red, bright green, or yellow-green, upper surface deeply concave, glandular hairs 1.5–2.8 mm. **Inflorescence** scapigerous; scapes 5.0–18.0 × 0.2 mm, erect, wiry, dark red, bright green or yellow-green, surface sparsely glandular-papillate. **Flowers** 1–per scape, 3 mm diameter, tetramerous, white, scentless. **Sepals** 4, 1.0–0.6 mm, obovate, upper ½ irregularly toothed, dark red, green or green-red, glabrous. **Petals** 4, 1.5–1.8 × 1.2–1.4 mm, narrowly obovate to obovate, white. **Stamens** 4, 0.6–0.8 mm, filaments white, anthers light yellow. **Fruit** 1.6 × 1.4 mm, orbicular, orbicular-obovate, dark red, green or green-red, containing up to 40 seeds. **Seeds** 0.4 × 0.25 mm, ovoid, black, surface deeply scalariform.



Locally common on dune lake turfs, Waipapakauri Far North. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 13/02/2025, Licence: CC BY.



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SIMILAR TAXA
The much more common and large *D. spatulata* is often confused with *D. pygmaea*. From *D. spatulata*, *D. pygmaea* can be immediately recognised by the prominent, erect tuft of stipules, which are much longer than the associated leaves.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island (Te Paki to about Dargaville, west of Auckland, near Waiouru), South Island (near Bluff Hill). It is probably present elsewhere but its small size and often reddish colouration makes it difficult to see in the open, clay pans and peaty ground it favours. Australia (common).

HABITAT
Coastal to subalpine. Usually in gumland and pakihi shrublands and adjoining wetlands, especially peat bogs. Also present on seasonally damp clay pans developed over ultramafic soils. This species requires open ground and will not long persist in the presence of other taller plants.

THREATS
At serious risk over much of its known range from wetland drainage and the spread of larger, faster growing weeds. Probably extinct in the Auckland area due to drain clearance and road maintenance. Still common from Kaitaia and Doubtless Bay north, though here too many of its key habitats are either drained, being drained or are vulnerable to spread of taller and faster growing weeds. Land development is also leading to populations being destroyed. Recent reports suggest it is still persisting in areas on the Volcanic Plateaus in the central North island.

GENUS
Drosera

FAMILY
Droseraceae

AUTHORITY
Drosera pygmaea DC.

SYNONYMS
None

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–March

FRUITING
December–May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Minute seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Difficult and should not be removed from the wild.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACW: Facultative Wetland
Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

PLANT OF THE MONTH
This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for April 2024 for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY
drosera: Dewy
pygmaea: Tiny

NVS CODE
DROPYG

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Relict | Qualifiers: DP, SO
2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, SO
2009 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, SO
2004 | Gradual Decline
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Northland: 2026 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPS DPT PF SO Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau" Ford et al. 2026 report.
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Extirpated | Qualifiers: EW Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The 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

de Lange PJ, Heenan PB, Norton DA, Rolfe JR, Sawyer JWD. 2010. Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch. 471 p.
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.
Salmon B. 2001. Carnivorous plants of New Zealand. Ecosphere Publications, Auckland, NZ. 303 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2008). Description based on Salmon (2001), live and herbarium specimens - see also de Lange et al. (2010).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/drosera-pygmaea/

PDF DATE

11 November 2026