

Gunnera densiflora

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Creeping, stoloniferous, Dioecious, herb forming compact cushions. Stolons much branched, partially buried, fleshy, succulent, up to 3 m long, 1.9–3.1 mm diameter, internodes 30–50 mm long, exposed parts pinkish-red, pink or greenish-red, densely clad in wispy, cob-webbed silky hairs. Leaves in compact, moderately tight, leafy overlapping rosettes; petioles stout, succulent, ± winged, 10–30 × 1.5–2.4 mm, pink, pinkish-red, or greenish-red, concave, ± channelled, and sparsely silky hairy above, glabrate to glabrous below, wider at base, slightly widening toward cuneate leaf base, lamina membranous to subcoriaceous, 10–46 × 15–38 mm, obovate, broadly obovate, ovate to oblong, elliptic to suborbicular, apex sub-acute to acute, cuneate, truncate to subcordate at base, round at apex, margins mostly crenate-crenulate, (rarely slightly sinuate), usually dentate near base, teeth ovate, oblong, obtuse, or acute, 0.8–1.8 mm, initially apiculate, apiculus caducous, green to dark green, sometimes mottled or flushed pink, upper and lower surface glabrate to glabrous, hairs sparse, mostly confined to midrib and veins in lower ¼ of lamina. Inflorescence an ebracteate, erect, fleshy, stout, spike up to 70 mm tall in male, 30 mm in female, located within leaf axils, peduncle and rachis silky hairy, hairs often matted: flowers 12–40 (or more) spiralled, widely spaced to ± crowded, glabrous, proximal flowers pedicellate grading through to sessile in distal portion; calyx lobes 0–2 (mostly present in distal portion of spike), lobes 0.9–2.5 × 0.4–1.2 mm, equal, linear-lanceolate, lanceolate to spatulate, subentire or dentate, glabrous; sepals much reduced or absent, 0.1–0.2 × 0.01–0.1 mm, oblong, glabrous, caducous, petals similar; male flowers: stamens 1–2, subsessile to sessile, filaments 0.2–0.9 mm, anthers pale yellow, gynoecium rudimentary; female flowers similar to male, stamens reduced to staminodes or absent, ovary 0.2–0.4 × 0.1–0.2 mm, urceolate, greenish-white, hyaline, glabrous, styles 2, prominent, widely spreading, 1.0–3.2 mm, subulate-filiform; stigmas papillate. Fruiting spike erect, up to 30 mm long; drupes widely spaced to densely clustered, fleshy, pendulous, 2.8–3.2 mm, obconic, pyriform or clavate, dark red. Endocarp 1.3–2.6 mm, oblong-elliptic, elliptic, dull orange-yellow, yellow or orange-brown, ± smooth.

SIMILAR TAXA

A distinct species, perhaps closest to *G. prorepens* but distinguished from it and all other indigenous *Gunnera* species by the coarsely dentate, broadly-ovate heart-shaped leaves, and dense fruiting stems.



Island Gully, Molesworth. Photographer: Cathy Jones, Date taken: 01/03/2002, Licence: CC BY.



Island Gully, Molesworth. Photographer: Cathy Jones, Date taken: 01/02/2009, Licence: CC BY.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Known only from the eastern side of the South Island from the inland Kaikoura Range west to Lake Tennyson, and south to the Craigieburn Range.

HABITAT

A species of montane lake margins and stream sides.

THREATS

It would appear that *Gunnera densiflora* has never been very common. This attribute, along with the fact that large parts of its intermontane basin habitat has been overrun by weeds, means that the species is probably threatened. However, because so populations are known, and because the species appears to be very variable throughout its range, an exact and confident conservation assessment is unlikely without further field surveys.

GENUS

Gunnera

FAMILY

Gunneraceae

AUTHORITY

Gunnera densiflora Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September–December

FRUITING

November–March

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Fleshy drupes are dispersed by frugivory and possibly ants (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from rooted pieces and divisions of whole plants. Fresh seed germinates easily. Grows best in damp, sunny conditions.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

gunnera: Named after Bishop Gunner, a Swedish botanist

densiflora: Densely flowered

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 34$

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Data Deficient

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Norton, D.A.; Rolfe, J.R.; Sawyer, J.W.D. 2010: Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11: 285-309

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2009). Description by P.J. de Lange subsequently published in de Lange et al (2010).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/gunnera-densiflora/>

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