

Huperzia australiana

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

Terrestrial, stiffly erect tufted plants producing 1 to many branches from near base. branches rigid, erect (rarely decumbent), undivided or branched 1–3×, 60–400 mm long, producing bulbils at intervals. **Sterile leaves and sporophylls** similarly densely spirally arranged, erect, imbricate, thick, ovate to lanceolate, acute 4–9 mm long, 1.0–1.5 mm wide, green to yellowish green, or tinged orange; margins entire or with few, obscure teeth at apex. **Sporophylls** scattered, not restricted to defined zones. **Sporangia** c. 1 mm long × 1.5 mm wide, obscured by sporophylls; sporangia often partially replaced by bulbils. (Description adapted from Chinnock (1998) and Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000)).

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from all other New Zealand members of the Lycopodiaceae by the scarcely differentiated sterile leaves and fertile sporophylls, as well as the unique presence of bulbils. Sterile terrestrial forms of *Phlegmariurus varius* growing in peat bogs are impossible to distinguish from sterile *H. australiana*.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island, South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands, Auckland Islands, Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku and Macquarie Islands. Known from the Raukumara Range southwards. Also Australia and Borneo.

HABITAT

Coastal to alpine (mostly alpine in the main islands of New Zealand but descending to sea level on the Chatham and subantarctic islands) in scrub, herbfield and peat bogs.

GENUS

Huperzia

FAMILY

Lycopodiaceae

AUTHORITY

Huperzia australiana (Herter) Holub

SYNONYMS

Urostachys australianus (Herter) Herter ex Nessel; *Urostachys cockaynei* Herter ex Nessel; *Lycopodium australianum* Herter; *Lycopodium australianum* (Herter) Allan; *Lycopodium selago* sensu Hook.f.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No



Upper Hollyford. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Upper Hollyford. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

N.A.

FRUITING

N.A.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should be left in the wild.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ETYMOLOGY

huperzia: Named after Johann Peter Huperz (1771-1816), an early 19th century German botanist and specialist in ferns

australiana: From the Latin australis meaning southern

NVS CODE

HUPAUS

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

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. ABR/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 16 March 2011. Description adapted from Chinnock (1998) and Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/huperzia-australiana/>

