

Hymenophyllum demissum

COMMON NAMES

drooping filmy fern, Irirangi, piripiri

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial or epiphytic fern forming large patches made up of numerous densely (more rarely diffuse) packed fronds. **Rhizomes** long-creeping, slender. **Stipes** 40–170 mm long, stout, pliant, wiry, glabrous usually not-winged, if winged then wing minute; rachises narrowly winged throughout. **Laminae** elliptic, ovate or narrowly ovate, 3–4-pinnate, 70–250 × 30–150 mm, pale green to dark green, glabrous. **Ultimate segments** oblong, margins smooth. **Sori** numerous on the terminal ends of the ultimate segments of the primary pinna. **Indusial flap margins** smooth or minutely toothed. (Description adapted from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000)).

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily recognised by the extremely wiry usually un-winged stipe, large glabrous fronds, smooth-margined pinna segments, and when fertile by the numerous, narrow, paired sori. When dry the fronds of this species rarely curl up.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Kermadec Islands (Raoul Island), North Island, South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands, Auckland Islands. Widespread except for the drier parts of the eastern South Island.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane in forest. Usually terrestrial where it typically forms dense carpets on the ground, on banks or on rotting logs. Also epiphytic, and then found mostly on the basal trunks of forest trees and tree ferns. Sometimes found in forest growing over boulders, rocks and on cliff faces.

GENUS

Hymenophyllum

FAMILY

Hymenophyllaceae

AUTHORITY

Hymenophyllum demissum (G. Forst.) Sw.

SYNONYMS

Mecodium demissum (G. Forst.) Copel.; *Hymenophyllum australe* var. *aucklandicum* (Bosch) C.Chr.; *Sphaerocionium demissum* (G.Forst.) C.Presl; *Trichomanes demissum* G.Forst.; *Hymenophyllum aucklandicum* Bosch;



Sori in pairs on ends of ultimate segments. Wellington. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 08/12/1984, Licence: CC BY.



Lower portions of fronds. Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 24/04/2011, Licence: CC BY.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should not be removed from the wild

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

UPL: Obligate Upland

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

ETYMOLOGY

hymenophyllum: Membranous leaf, from the Greek humen and phullon

demissum: Drooping; from the latin demissus; referring to the leaves when the plant is perched on trees

NVS CODE

HYMDEM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 72

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

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.

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 (17 April 2011). Description adapted from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/hymenophyllum-demissum/>

PDF DATE

08 June 2026