

# Hymenophyllum flabellatum

## COMMON NAMES

filmy fern

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

**Rhizome** long creeping, wiry, branched, 0.3–0.8 mm diameter, tan-coloured, with opaque villous hairs but tomentose at the stipe junction.

**Fron**s 20–80 mm long, peundulous, rarely suberect. **Stipe** wiry, flexuose, 8–20 mm long, unwinged, with scattered pale-white or yellow hairs extending along main rachis. **Lamina** yellow-green, very variable in size and shape, oblong-linear to ovate-lanceolate (dwarfed fronds often broadly deltoid to round), 20–270 × 10–65 mm; primary division pinnate in the lower part, deeply pinnatifid above; pinnae or primary laminal segments oblique, 1–2-pinnatifid, flabellate, ovate or rhombic. **Ultimate segments** linear, 0.5–2.2 mm wide, glabrous to glabrescent; margins entire, 1–2-cells thick, apex obtuse, occasionally emarginate. **Sori** numerous; involucre ovate to rotund, bilabiate to below the middle, 0.5–2.0 × 0.5–2.0 mm; base broadly and shallowly cuneate; margins entire; receptacle included or slightly exserted. (Description adapted from Bostock & Spokes (1998) and Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000)).

## SIMILAR TAXA

Only likely to be confused with the montane to subalpine, much less common endemic *Hymenophyllum rufescens*, which is a much smaller plant (up to 50 mm long), with deltoid fronds whose pinnae are covered in reddish, long, flexuose hairs. Although *Hymenophyllum flabellatum* and *H. rufescens* are rarely found growing together, occasional intermediates have been found, some of which are suggestive that both species may at times hybridise.

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: Kermadec Islands, North Island, South Island (except eastern part), Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands, Antipodes Islands, Auckland Islands. Also Australia (Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania); Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa and Tahiti.

## HABITAT

Coastal to montane forest. Often epiphytic, especially on tree fern trunks, but also on shaded or sheltered, damp rocks, cliff faces, and overhanging banks

## GENUS

Hymenophyllum

## FAMILY

Hymenophyllaceae



Sori. Silverstream Scenic Reserve, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 03/11/2006, Licence: CC BY.



Scattered hairs on rachis. Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 23/04/2011, Licence: CC BY.

## AUTHORITY

Hymenophyllum flabellatum Labill.

## SYNONYMS

Mecodium flabellatum (Labill.) Copel.; Hymenophyllum nitens R.Br.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## 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.

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for September 2023](#) for the full story.

## ETYMOLOGY

**hymenophyllum**: Membranous leaf, from the Greek humen and phullon

**flabellatum**: Fan shaped; from the Latin flabellum; shape of the leaves

## NVS CODE

HYMFLA

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 72

## 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

Bostock PD, Spokes TM. 1998. Hymenophyllaceae. *Flora of Australia 48, Ferns Gymnosperms and allied groups*: 116–148. ABR/CSIRO Victoria, Australia.

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 (July 2009). Description adapted from Bostock & Spokes (1998) and Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000).

**MORE INFORMATION**

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

**PDF DATE**

27 May 2026