

Hymenophyllum frankliniae

COMMON NAMES

rusty filmy fern

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Epiphytic (rarely terrestrial) fern forming dense patches usually on tree ferns. **Rhizomes** finely hairy, long creeping, gracile. **Stipes** 20–90 mm long, thin, brittle, not winged, covered in minute stellate hairs; rachises narrowly winged in upper part. **Laminae** narrowly elliptic to narrowly ovate, 2–3-pinnate, 50–200 × 20–50 mm, dull olive-green to brown-green, densely invested in yellow-brown to red-brown stellate hairs. **Ultimate segments** oblong, crowded, margins smooth. **Sori** terminating ultimate segments, slightly sunk in lamina, many on each primary pinna. **Indusial flaps** with smooth margins, abaxially stellate-hairy. (Description adapted from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000)).

SIMILAR TAXA

A very distinctive species readily recognised by its penchant for growing on the trunks of tree ferns, and by the dull olive-green to brown-green fronds that are densely covered in yellow-brown or red-brown stellate hairs. It is unlikely to be confused with any other species in New Zealand with the possible exception of *Hymenophyllum malingii*. *Hymenophyllum malingii* is a montane to subalpine species that is usually found on the trunks of kaikawaka (*Libocedrus bidwillii*) and has fronds that are superficially similar to *H. frankliniae* because they too are densely invested in stellate hairs. It is however, easily distinguished from *H. frankliniae* by its habitat preferences and by the narrow, tubular ultimate segments of the pinnae.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. In closed forest where it is usually found epiphytic on the trunks of tree ferns (especially species of *Dicksonia*) and kamahi (*Pterophylla racemosa*). Occasionally (especially in very wet forest) it may be found growing on clay banks or amongst mosses on damp boulders.

GENUS

Hymenophyllum

FAMILY

Hymenophyllaceae

AUTHORITY

Hymenophyllum frankliniae Colenso



Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 08/05/2011, Licence: CC BY.



Stellate hairs. Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 16/08/2006, Licence: CC BY.

SYNONYMS

Hymenophyllum ferrugineum Colla of New Zealand authors, Sphaerocionium ferrugineum (Colla) Copel.; Hymenophyllum aeruginosum var. franklinianum (Colenso) Hook.; Hymenophyllum subtilissimum Kunze; Sphaerocionium frankliniae (Colenso) K.Iwats.; Hymenophyllum aeruginosum sensu Hook.f.; Hymenophyllum frankliniae Colenso; Hymenophyllum franklinianum Colenso

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Hymenophyllum frankliniae has long been known as *H. ferrugineum* in New Zealand. However, it is now recognised that *H. ferrugineum* is endemic to southern South America and the Juan Fernandez Islands.

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

ETYMOLOGY

hymenophyllum: Membranous leaf, from the Greek humen and phullon

NVS CODE

HYMFRA

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

MORE INFORMATION

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

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27 May 2026