

Hymenophyllum minimum

COMMON NAMES

filmy fern

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Diminutive, compact, dense turf-forming fern. **Rhizomes** long-creeping, very slender and thin, much branched and interwoven. **Fronds** bright emerald green. **Stipes** 3–8 mm long, very thin; stipes and rachises not winged, glabrous. **Laminae** round to elliptic, pinnate, 5–15 × 5–10 mm, glabrous. **Pinnae** in 1–5 pairs, margins prominently toothed. **Sori** solitary and terminating rachis, pedunculate. **Indusial flaps** toothed, abaxially spiny. (Description adapted from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000)).

SIMILAR TAXA

Recognised by its small stature, bright green colour, prominently toothed pinnae, solitary, stalked (pedunculate) sori terminating the rachises, and by the toothed indusial flaps whose outer (abaxial) surfaces are covered in spines.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island (from the upper Kauaeranga Valley (near Thames) and Mt Pirongia south), South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands, Antipodes Islands, Auckland Islands.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane (usually montane in northern part of range). A common species of shaded rock faces, cliffs, overhangs, and boulder and talus slopes—sometimes in places subjected to salt spray. Often in rather open sites and in places that often dry out for protracted periods of time. Very rarely found growing as an epiphyte.

GENUS

Hymenophyllum

FAMILY

Hymenophyllaceae

AUTHORITY

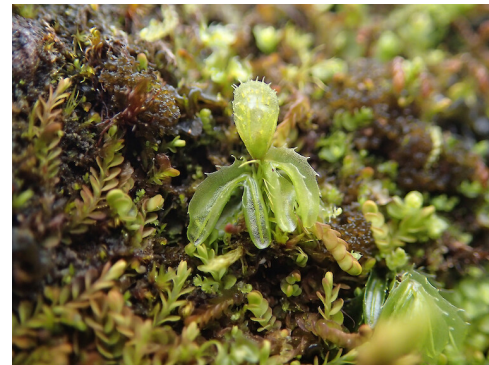
Hymenophyllum minimum A. Rich.

SYNONYMS

Mecodium minimum (A. Rich.) Copel.; Hymenophyllum pygmaeum Colenso

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes



Hokitika Gorge. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 20/11/2016, Licence: CC BY-NC-SA.



Otira Valley, Arthur's Pass National Park. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 24/10/2017, Licence: CC BY-NC-SA.

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 October 2021](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

hymenophyllum: Membranous leaf, from the Greek humen and phullon

NVS CODE

HYMMIN

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

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NS, Sp 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-minimum/>

PDF DATE

08 June 2026