

Hymenophyllum villosum

COMMON NAMES

hairy filmy fern

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 dense patches on suitable substrates. **Rhizomes** long-creeping, slender. Frond dark green, strongly aromatic, scent somewhat sanguinely metallic (especially when dry).

Stipes 20–90 mm long, slender; stipes, rachises and laminae copiously covered in hairs, narrowly winged for most of length, black, wing often zig-zagged in upper portion. **Laminae** 50–180–(240) × 20–100 mm, narrowly ovate, elliptic to narrowly elliptic-deltoid, 3–4-pinnate, glabrescent. **Ultimate segments** 0.25–0.75 mm wide, oblong, margins entire though usually undulose especially toward distal portion of frond.

Sori on short branches in distal portion of frond, many borne on each primary pinna. **Indusium** narrowly ovoid to ellipsoid, abaxially smooth; indusial flaps entire; receptacle included. (Description adapted from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000)).

SIMILAR TAXA

Closely allied to *Hymenophyllum sanguinolentum* from which it differs by its smaller over all dimensions, more finely divided fronds with narrower ultimate segments; by the copiously hairy stipes, rachises and laminae; and by the abaxially smooth rather than crested surfaces of the indusia. In some parts of its range it can be found growing syntopically with *Hymenophyllum sanguinolentum*, whilst in other locations, like the Chatham Islands it grows in apparent isolation from *H. sanguinolentum* which is not known there.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands, Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku, Auckland Islands. From Te Moehau and Mt Pirongia south becoming more common in the southern North Island. Widespread through the remaining islands.

HABITAT

Montane to subalpine in closed forest and subalpine scrub. Usually epiphytic, occasionally on rotting logs, mossy hummocks, rocks and cliff faces.

GENUS

Hymenophyllum

FAMILY

Hymenophyllaceae



Cobb Valley. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 17/03/2016, Licence: CC BY.



Mt Te Moehau. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Hymenophyllum villosum Colenso

SYNONYMS

Mecodium villosum (Colenso) Copel.

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

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ETYMOLOGY

hymenophyllum: Membranous leaf, from the Greek humen and phullon

NVS CODE

HYMVIL

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

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 June 2026