Lateristachys diffusa

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Lycophytes (clubmosses, selaginella, quillworts)

FLOWER COLOURS
No flowers

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Main stems up to 200 mm long, prostrate, rooting at intervals. Branchlet systems scattered along main stems, prostrate, appressed to substratum, but with tips upturned, dichotomously branched and ± rosette-forming, often imbricate. **Leaves** spirally arranged, imbricate, curved upwards, thick, 3.0–5.5 mm long, 0.5–0.8 mm wide,linear-subulate to linear-lanceolate, green and then often tipped reddish brown, or reddish brown. **Strobili** solitary, 6–16 mm long, dark reddish brown, lateral or terminal, sessile. **Sporophylls** imbricate, ovate, acuminate; bases coalescent; margins entire or with a few obscure teeth. (Description adapted from Chinnock (1998) and Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000)).



Charleston. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Charleston. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
In its extreme state it is easily distinguished from the most common form of *Lateristachys lateralis* by its dichotomously-branched, prostrate stems. However, forms of *L. lateralis* growing in restiad peat in Waikato and on the Chatham Islands, and plants of *L. lateralis* in North-west Nelson appear to intergrade with *L. diffusa*. Australian treatments (e.g., Chinnock 1998) keep both species but, based on field observations in New Zealand, it would seem that the status of *L. diffusa* needs to be investigated further.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island (from the Raukumara Range southwards), South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham and Auckland Islands. Also Australia.

HABITAT
Lowland to alpine (mostly montane to alpine in northern part of range), in peat bogs, pakihi country, on coal measures, fell field and on poorly drained, nutrient impoverished soils.

GENUS
Lateristachys

FAMILY
Lycopodiaceae

AUTHORITY
Lateristachys diffusa (R.Br.) Holub

SYNONYMS
Lycopodium laterale var. diffusum (R.Br.) Hook.f.; Lepidotis diffusa (R.Br.) Rothm.; Lycopodiella ramulosa (Kirk) B.Øllg.; Lycopodium diffusum R.Br.; Lycopodium ramulosum Kirk; Lateristachys ramulosa (Kirk) Holub; Lycopodiella diffusa (R.Br.) B.Øllg.

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
N.A.

FRUITING
N.A.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Transplants can be grown moderately easily if planted in peat within a pot which is then kept partially immersed in a tub of water.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACW: Facultative Wetland
Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

WHERE TO BUY
Not commercially available

ETYMOLOGY
diffusa: Of spreading growth

NVS CODE
LYCDIF

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
Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, RR, Sp Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The 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.
Chinnock RJ. 1998. Lycopodiaceae. *Flora of Australia 48, Ferns Gymnosperms and allied groups*: 66–85. ABRS/CSIRO Victoria, Australia.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 16 March 2011. Description adapted from Chinnock (1998) and Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lateristachys-diffusa/

PDF DATE

25 August 2026