

Lepidothamnus laxifolius

COMMON NAME

pygmy pine

SYNONYMS

Dacrydium laxifolium Hook.f.

FAMILY

Podocarpaceae

AUTHORITY

Lepidothamnus laxifolius (Hook.f.) Quinn

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Gymnosperms

NVS CODE

LEPLAX

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 30

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, (Coromandel Range, Raukumara Range, Te Uruwera through the Central Volcanic Plateau and Kaingaroa Plain south in a patchy distribution to Ruahine Range), South Island (mostly west of main divide from Kahurangi Range south to Fiordland), and Stewart Island.

HABITAT

Montane and subalpine, rarely lower alpine, shrubland and open scrub, usually on wet ground.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).



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



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

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dioecious or monoecious, sprawling shrub. **Branches** 2–5(–10) mm diameter towards base, up to 1 m long or more; branchlets numerous, very slender, flexuous. **Foliage** polymorphic; juveniles 5–12 mm. long, subulate to narrow-linear, acute, flat, often curved; later leaves lessening to 2–3 mm long (often flowering and fruiting in this stage); fully adult leaves 1–2 mm long, appressed, imbricating, oblong-ovate, obtuse, keeled; branchlets often showing a mixture of leaf-forms. **Male strobili** solitary, terminal, sessile, up to 8 mm. long; apiculus broadly triangular, acute. **Female cones** may be found on the same plant as male strobili. **Ovule** solitary, terminal. **Receptacle** swollen, red/crimson, succulent, rarely dry. **Seed** 3–5 mm. long, black, nutlike, oblong-cylindrical, obtuse, with stout, curved apiculus, far exserted beyond epimatium.

SIMILAR TAXA

Manoao colensoi is a much larger plant.

Lepidothamnus intermedius is generally a larger plant, yet may occur in dwarf-form, a much stouter less flexible plant. Both species can be seen growing side by side. Occasionally seen as a hybrid between *L. intermedius* and *L. laxifolius* which can make identification very difficult until one is very familiar with all the parent species (illustrated in Wilson & Galloway, 1993).

FLOWERING

Male cone: October–December

FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

FRUITING

February–April

LIFE CYCLE

Arrilate seeds are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

ETYMOLOGY

lepidothamnus: From the Greek lepidō 'scale' & thamnōs 'crowded or close set'

laxifolius: Soft-leaved

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by M.D. Ward (12 April 2024). Description from Allan (1961), Wilson & Galloway (1993).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H. H. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. 1. Wellington: Government Printer. Page 110–111.

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>.

Wilson, H.D. and Galloway, T., 1993. Small-leaved shrubs of New Zealand. Christchurch: Manuka Press. Pages 253–254.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lepidothamnus-laxifolius/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lepidothamnus-laxifolius/>