

Leptinella dioica

COMMON NAMES

shore cotula

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dioecious or monoecious, creeping, somewhat fleshy perennial herb of usually wet coastal habitats. Rhizomes at or near soil surface, green, dark green to purple-green, pliant, sparsely to densely pilose hairy, pale, wiry and glabrous if buried; branches uncommon, usually single at flowering nodes; leaves in two rows, single at the apex, 3-30 mm apart. Short shoots alternate, with up to 5 clustered leaves, occasionally converting to rhizomes with more distant leaves. Roots slender and weak, up to 0.8 mm diam. Leaves variable in size, shape and divisions, entire, simple, to incised-pinnatifid or pinnatifid, 7-130 x 3-20 mm; blade 5-70(-90) mm, lanceolate, narrowly to broadly oblong, elliptic, oblanceolate or suborbicular, fleshy, light green, green, wine-red or glaucous, usually without dark pigment but sometimes leaf divisions heavily brown or pink-pigmented, more or less glabrous, glandular punctate, midrib not raised on ventral surface, rarely entire, otherwise the lobes, pinnae or teeth, in 4-12(-30) pairs, distant, close-set or overlapping, oblong to orbicular; proximal lobes, pinnae or teeth cut to rhachis, sinuses of distal lobes usually not reaching rhachis, sometimes cut only 1.5 to rhachis at widest part of leaf; teeth often absent but sometimes up to 6 per lobe or pinna, on the distal and outer margins, small triangular, obtuse or rounded, often apiculate. Peduncles sparsely to densely villous on rhizomes, about equal to leaves in length, 10-60(-80) mm, ebracteate or bearing 1 simple bract. Pistillate heads 2-10 mm, up to 12 mm diameter in fruit; surface convex; involucre urceolate; involucral bracts 10-30, subequally 3- or more seriate, broadly elliptic, green, glabrous or sparsely villous, with a wide, usually brown-tipped, scarious margin; inner bracts elongating after anthesis to enclose subglobose fruiting head; florets 10-80 (or more), 2-5 mm long, curved, yellow-green; corolla slightly longer than wide, dentition unequal. Staminate capitula 3-8 mm diameter, involucre hemispherical, bracts 5-10, subequally uni- or biseriate, not growing after anthesis, florets more numerous. Bisexual heads mostly staminate. Cypsela up to 1.9 x 1 mm, initially pale and chartaceous, maturing brown and smooth, slightly compressed, unwrinkled.



With *Lilaeopsis novae-zelandiae*, Tiwai Peninsula. Photographer: Anne Humburg, Date taken: 14/01/2009, Licence: All rights reserved.



Makara Estuary, Wellington. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 12/03/2008, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA

Recognised by the glabrous leaves which are usually simple, with the lobes, pinnae or teeth cut less than half way to the rhachis. The leaves are usually without pigment except for the apices of the lobes, pinnae or teeth. It is most likely to be confused with *L. squalida* Hook.f. subsp. *squalida* but that plant has leaves pinnately divided more than half way to the rhachis, and the basal pinnae are always darkly pigmented.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North, South and Stewart Islands. Not known from Northland or Fiordland.

HABITAT

Coastal and inland up to 1000 m a.s.l.. In the northern part of its range usually on the margins of saltmarshes but further south extending well inland in seepages and permanently open, damp turfs.

GENUS

Leptinella

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Leptinella dioica Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

Cotula dioica (Hook.f.) Hook.f., *Cotula dioica* (Hook.f.) Hook.f. subsp. *dioica*, *Cotula dioica* var. *crenatifolia* Kirk, *Cotula obscura* Kirk, *Cotula dioica* var. *obscura* (Kirk) Cheeseman, *Leptinella dioica* Hook.f. subsp. *dioica*, *Cotula dioica* subsp. *monoica* D.G.Lloyd, *Leptinella dioica* subsp. *monoica* (D.G.Lloyd) D.G.Lloyd et C.J.Webb

TAXONOMIC NOTES

NZPCN does not regard *Leptinella dioica* subsp. *monoica* (D.G.Lloyd) D.G.Lloyd et C.J.Webb as distinct from *L. dioica* s.s.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

August - January

FRUITING

October - June

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Papery cypselae are dispersed by wind and possibly attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from rooted pieces. An excellent ground cover and ideal for lawns which are seasonally damp or somewhat poorly drained. Highly variable, and the numerous wild forms could provide an excellent source for future cultivar selections

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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

CULTIVATION

Commonly available from retail and specialist native plant garden centres but usually incorrectly identified.

ETYMOLOGY

leptinella: From the Greek word leptos (meaning slender, thin or delicate), referring to the ovary

dioica: Two plants

NVS CODE

LEPDIO

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 260

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 Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DE, Sp, DPR, DPS, DPT, PF, RR, RF 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

Lloyd, D.G. 1972: A revision of the New Zealand, Subantarctic, and South American species of *Cotula*, section *Leptinella*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 10: 277-372.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285-309

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 31 August 2006. Description from Lloyd (1972) - as *Cotula dioica*.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/leptinella-dioica/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026