

Leptinella potentillina

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout, rather robust, fleshy, diffusely creeping to densely compact turf forming, monoecious, perennial herb. Rhizomes on soil surface, rather thick, fleshy, pale yellow, cream or white, sparsely pilose hairy; branches usually single at flowering nodes, leaves in two rows, single at apex, 50-40 mm apart. Short shoots alternate on both sides of rhizome, with clustered leaves, sometimes converted into rhizomes with distant leaves. Roots slender and weak up to 0.5 mm diameter. Leaves 1-pinnatifid, 20-120 x 4-30 mm; blade 10-80 mm, obovate, fleshy, yellow-green, without brown pigmentation, glabrous or glabrescent, midrib slightly raised on proximal part of ventral surface; pinnae 6-15 pairs, not overlapping, cut to rhachis or distal most sinuses, not quite reaching rhachis in larger leaves, elliptic; teeth on most pinnae, up to 12 per pinna, almost equally on distal and proximal margins, cut 1/4 across pinnae, triangular, obtuse or acute, occasionally themselves bearing 1-2 teeth. Peduncles usually on rhizomes, stout, > leaves 20-70 mm, ebracteate or with 1 bract, sparsely pilose hairy. Capitula 5-8 mm diameter, hemispherical to steeply convex; involucre flat or spreading; involucre bracts 15-30, 2- or more subequally seriate, elliptic to oblong, yellow-green, glabrescent, with a narrow transparent, scarious margin, not elongating after anthesis; pistillate florets 60-200, in 4-6 rows, 2 mm long, curved, yellow-green, yellow to lemon yellow, corolla slightly longer than wide, unequally toothed; staminate florets more numerous. Cypselae up to 1.5 x 0.8 mm, brown when maturity, slightly compressed, initially chartaceous maturing with a smooth surface.

SIMILAR TAXA

The extremely robust, usually yellow-green leaves and flowering scapes with yellow-green, yellow to lemon-yellow capitula immediately mark this species out from other New Zealand *Leptinella* species. It is perhaps most similar to *L. tenella*, a North and northern South Island species, from which it is allopatric. *L. potentillina* differs from *L. tenella* by its much larger, robust habit, and evenly yellow-green rather than bright green coloured leaves which are 20-150 cm 10-40 mm long.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Auckland and Chatham Islands

HABITAT

Coastal, usually in or near seepages subject to a tidal influence, also a component of damp turfs, estuarine vegetation, sand dunes and damp sandy hollows. On the Chatham Islands is often conspicuous on the sand beaches of the lagoon.



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THREATS

Not threatened, being very common on the Chatham Islands, though much less so on the Auckland Islands, where it mainly known Adams Island. However, it is listed because it is an island endemic, occupying a small (by global standards) geographic area

GENUS

Leptinella

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Leptinella potentillina F.Muell.

SYNONYMS

Cotula potentillina (F.Muell.) Druce, Cotula muelleri Kirk

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

August - February

FRUITING

September - July

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from rooted pieces. An attractive plant for a rockery or lawn. Does best in damp sunny situations. The spectacular, large, yellow-green, ferny leaves and robust yellow-green, yellow to lemon-yellow capitula make this an especially attractive species worthy of wider cultivation.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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

CULTIVATION

Occasionally sold by specialist native plant nurseries. On the West Coast of the South Island, an extremely robust Leptinella, usually sold in the nursery trade as *L. dioica* Hook.f., or *L. cv. Seal Island* occurs, and this plant is superficially similar to *L. potentillina*, differing mainly by its dioecious flowerign habit, erect, dark green leaves and by the pinnae which are markedly less toothed.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for July 2011](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

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

NVS CODE

LEPPOT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 52

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

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* *potentillina*.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026