

Leptinella pusilla

SYNONYMS

Cotula perpusilla Hook.f., *Cotula angustata* G.Simpson

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Leptinella pusilla Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

NVS CODE

LEPPUS

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 104

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2018 | At Risk – Declining

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands. In the north known from near Dannevirke (historic) south to Cape Palliser and the south Wellington coast. In the South Island easterly from the Richmond Range (Marlborough) south to the Foveaux Strait.

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine (0-1200 m a.s.l.) but more frequent at lower altitudes. Usually found in open sites on gravel, sand or in sparsely vegetated tussock grassland, or in the shade of rock outcrops.



Leptinella pusilla. Photographer: John Barkla



Palliser Bay. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

FEATURES

Dioecious, creeping, tufted perennial herb of open ground and grassland. Rhizomes deeply buried, pale, wiry and glabrous; branches uncommon, usually single at flowering nodes; initially clad in spirally arranged scales set 5-20 mm apart. Short shoots growing upward from buried rhizomes, each apically bearing 4-8 tufted leaves. Roots slender, weak, 0.5 mm diameter. Leaves 1-pinnatifid, 10-60 x 3-10 mm; blade 5-30 mm long, light green usually with proximal or all pinnae heavily brown-pigmented, lanceolate to obovate, submembranous, glabrous to densely villous hairy, midrib raised along most of ventral surface; pinnae 8-15 pairs, usually distant, sometimes overlapping, cut to rachis, oblong or obovate; teeth absent or up to 8 per pinna, on distal margins only, usually obscured by hairs, cut 1/4-1/2 across pinna, narrowly triangular, acute to acuminate, sometimes with a terminal web of hairs. Peduncles villous about equal in length to leaves, 10-30 mm, ebracteate or bearing 1 simple bract. Pistillate capitula 2-4 mm extending to 8 mm diameter in fruit; surface convex, involucre urceolate; involucre bracts 15-30, unequally 3-, or more seriate, broadly elliptic, green, more or less villous with a broad, usually brown tipped, scarious margin; inner bracts elongated after anthesis to enclose subglobose fruiting head; florets 25-80, 2 mm long, curved, yellow-green; corolla slightly longer than wide, dentition unequal. Staminate heads 3-5 mm diameter; involucre hemispherical, involucre bracts 5-10, subequally uni-, or biseriate, not extending after anthesis; florets similar but slightly more numerous. Cypsela 1.6 x 1 mm, initially pale, chartaceous maturing brown and smooth, slightly compressed, unwrinkled.

SIMILAR TAXA

Leptinella serrulata (D.G.Lloyd) D.G.Lloyd et C.J.Webb and *L. calcarea* (D.G.Lloyd) D.G.Lloyd et C.J.Webb are closely related to *L. pusilla*. *Leptinella calcarea* differs by its rigidly stiff, fleshy leaves lacking any brown pigmentation, it is also geographically isolated from both *L. serrulata* and *L. pusilla*. *Leptinella serrulata* differs from *L. pusilla* mainly by its consistently and copiously silvery-hairy, submembranous leaves, and by the pinnae that are usually overlapping rather than distant. Furthermore, the pinnae teeth are more or less oblong rather than triangular. *L. pusilla* is frequently sympatric with *L. serrulata*. Exact distinction between both species is often not that easy and further research is needed to confirm the status of *L. serrulata*.

FLOWERING

August - November

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

FRUITING

October - January (-March)

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown and so fairly common in cultivation. However, most cultivated material is of one sex-type so seed is rarely produced. An excellent ground cover for sunny, dry sites on free drainign soils. Once established this species is remarkably drought tolerant. Plants sold as *Cotula perpusilla* cv. Platts Black are not *L. pusilla* but *L. serrulata*.

ETYMOLOGY

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

pusilla: Small

ATTRIBUTION

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

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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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