Leptinella serrulata

COMMON NAMES
dryland button daisy

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPR, DPT, PD
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Green, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Dioecious, creeping, perennial herb forming small tufted patches within open grassland. **Rhizomes** buried, pale, wiry and glabrous; branches infrequent, usually single at flowering nodes; basally clad in scales grading up to leaves spirally-arranged and set 5–15 mm apart. Short shoots growing up from buried rhizomes, bearing 3–6 tufted leaves near apices. **Roots** slender, easily broken, 0.4 mm diameter. **Leaves** 1-pinnatifid, 7–20 × 2–6 mm; blade 6–20 mm, green, glaucous or purple-black, elliptic or obovate, submembranous, older leaves usually diffusely brown-pigmented, hairy to densely silvery-hairy, midrib raised along most of ventral surface though sometimes obscured by hairs; pinnae 8–20 pairs, close-set, overlapping, cut to rhachis, broadly obovate; teeth on all or the majority of pinnae, up to 6 per pinna, on distal margins, cut c. ½ across pinna, close-set, more or less oblong, obtuse, sometimes obscured by hairs. **Peduncles** villous hairy, on short shoots, about equal in length to leaves, 10–30 mm, ebracteate or bearing 1 simple bract. **Pistillate capitula** 2–4 mm (up to 8 mm diameter in fruit); surface convex; involucre urceolate; involucral bracts 20–40, unequally 3- or more seriate, broadly elliptic, green, villous, elongated after anthesis to enclose subglobose frutiing head; florets 30–95, 2 mm long, curved, yellow-green, corolla marginally longer than wide, dentition unequal. **Staminate capitula** 3–5 mm diameter; involucre hemispherical; involucral bracts 8–15, unequally uni-, or biseriate, not elongated after anthesis; florets slightly more numerous. **Cypsela** 1.4 × 0.8 mm, initially chartaceous and pale maturing brown and smooth, slightly compressed, unwrinkled.

SIMILAR TAXA
Leptinella pusilla Hook.f. and *L. calcarea* (D.G.Lloyd) D.G.Lloyd et C.J.Webb are most similar to *L. serrulata*. *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 pusilla* differs from *L. serrulata* by its glabrous to hairy, membranous leaves, bearing pinnae that are separated rather than overlapping, and by the pinnae teeth which are triangular rather than oblong. *L. serrulata* is frequently sympatric with *L. pusilla*.



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DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. new Zealand: South Island (east of the main divide from Marlborough (Wairau River) south to the Foveaux Strait, mainly well inland from Canterbury to Otago).

HABITAT
Sea level to 1500 m a.s.l. Usually found in dry intermontane basins and along river flats where it grows in open sites amongst tussock grassland. More rarely coastal, where it colonises open sandy ground.

THREATS
A lowland to montane species of open tussock grasslands. It has declined in abundance in many areas due to the spread of hawkweeds and introduced grasses, habitat modification and agricultural intensification (e.g. cultivation and irrigation).

GENUS
Leptinella

FAMILY
Asteraceae

AUTHORITY
Leptinella serrulata (D.G.Lloyd) D.G.Lloyd et C.Webb

SYNONYMS
Cotula serrulata D.G.Lloyd

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September–November–(January)

FRUITING
October–February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easy from rooted pieces and by the division of established plants. Fresh seed should germinate easily.

CULTIVATION
Sold by many nurseries usually by the name *Cotula perpusilla* cv. Platts Black. *Cotula perpusilla* is the same species as *Leptinella pusilla*.

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

NVS CODE
LEPSER

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 52

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, Sp
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon
2004 | Gradual Decline
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, NStr, PF, Sp 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 DG. 1972. A revision of the New Zealand, Subantarctic, and South American species of *Cotula*, section *Leptinella*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany 10(2)*: 277–372. https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1972.10429156.

ATTRIBUTION

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

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/leptinella-serrulata/

PDF DATE

25 May 2026