

Leptinella squalida subsp. squalida

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, widely creeping, fast-growing perennial herb forming dense monospecific turfs or intermingled with other turf species. Rhizomes at or near soil surface, green, dark green to red-green, flexible, pilose hairy; branches usually single at flowering nodes; leaves in two rows, single at apex, 5-30 mm apart. Short shoots alternate on both sides of the rhizomes with distant leaves. Roots slender and weak, up to 0.8 mm diameter. Leaves 1-pinnatifid, 5-10(-20) x 3-20 mm; blade 4-6(-10) mm, bright green or yellow-green with basal 1/3-1/2 brown-pigmented and/or the proximal pinnae, broadly elliptic or obovate, fleshy to membranous, sparsely pilose hairy to moderately pilose hairy or glabrous, midrib raised along majority of ventral surface; pinnae 6-20 pairs, oblong to elliptic, large pinnae suborbicular to obovate, usually equal in length and width, close-set, overlapping; distal pinnae not cut to rhachis, closer together and set at a narrower angle to the rhachis than the middle pinnae, often overlapping; middle and proximal pinnae cut to rhachis, usually distant, but often overlapping; teeth usually present on pinnae with up to 10 per pinna, oblong to acute. Peduncles borne on rhizomes, sparsely pilose hairy, usually longer than leaves, 10-60 mm, ebracteate or with 1 simple bract. Pistillate capitula 3-5 mm elongating to 10 mm diameter in fruit; surface convex; involucre urceolate; involucral bracts 15-40, subequally 3- or more seriate, green, broadly elliptic, somewhat villous, with a broad brown-tipped scarious margin; inner bracts elongating after anthesis to enclose subglobose fruiting head; florets 15-70, 2.2.5 mm long, yellow-green, curved, corolla slightly longer than wide, dentition unequal. Staminate heads 4-7 mm diameter; involucre hemispherical; involucral bracts 5-10, uni- or biseriate, not extending after anthesis; florets more numerous. Cypsela 1.9 x 0.9 mm, initially pale, chartaceous and wrinkled, maturing brown and smooth.

SIMILAR TAXA

Differs from *L. squalida* subsp. *mediana* (D.G.Lloyd) D.G.Lloyd et C.J.Webb by its less divided leaves with the distal pinnae not cut to the rhachis, close-set and positioned at a narrower angle to the rhachis than the middle pinnae. It is best distinguished from *L. dioica* by the sparsely hairy leaves whose basal pinnae are distinctively brown-pigmented.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North, South (North-West Nelson only) and Chatham Islands. In North Island uncommon north of the Waikato.



Leptinella squalida subsp. *squalida* showing growth habit, Cultivated Hamilton, ex Waikato River. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 09/12/2006, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Leptinella squalida subsp. *squalida* close up of flowering capitulum. Terawhiti Station, south Wellington coast. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 01/11/2006, Licence: CC BY.

HABITAT

Mostly coastal or inland (0-300 m a.s.l.), in open turf, on coastal cliffs, in coastal turf, along river beds or in open grassland and open, damp places within shrubland and lowland forest. In some urban areas reported as a lawn weed. Often found growing with *Hydrocotyle heteromeria* A.Rich. and *H. microphylla* A.Cunn. Some forms of *L. squalida* subsp. *squalida* have also been gathered from subalpine to alpine habitats in the central North Island.

THREATS

Not Threatened but scarce north of Waikato.

GENUS

Leptinella

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Leptinella squalida Hook.f. subsp. *squalida*

SYNONYMS

Cotula squalida (Hook.f.) Hook.f.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Many botanists regard the very different, cytologically distinct subsp. *mediana* (D.G.Lloyd) D.G.Lloyd et C.J.Webb to be a distinct species

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

August - February

FRUITING

September - June

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from rooted pieces and tolerant of a wide range of soil, sun and shade conditions. An excellent lawn cover. Very variable, so could benefit from cultivar selection.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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

CULTIVATION

Commonly available from retail plant and specialist native plant nurseries

ETYMOLOGY

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

squalida: Unattractive

NVS CODE

LEPSSS

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 Data Deficient 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 Data Deficient 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 squalida* subsp. *squalida*.

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

27 May 2026