

# Leptopteris superba

## COMMON NAME

Heruheru, crêpe fern, Prince of Wales feathers

## SYNONYMS

*Todea superba* Colenso; *Osmunda superba* (Colenso) J.B.Armstr.

## FAMILY

Osmundaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Leptopteris superba* (Colenso) C. Presl

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

## NVS CODE

LEPSUP

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North, South and Stewart Islands from Waipoua Forest south but scarce north of Auckland.

## HABITAT

Widespread in dense forest though it is mainly found in montane forest in the northern part of its range. It is especially luxuriant in areas of high rainfall reaching its greatest densities on the West Coast of the South Island

## FEATURES

Trunks up to 1 m tall. Stipes 15-80 mm long, pale brown, woolly hairy, with ear-like lobes at base. Frond delicate, membranous, translucent, laminae elliptic, tapering equally to base and apex, 3-pinnate, 0.25-0.1m long, 80-250 mm wide, dark emerald green, woolly hairy, veins free. Primary pinnae in 35-60 pairs, crowded, basal ones 5-10 mm long, ultimate segments linear, sticking up at 90 degrees to plane of frond. Sporangia scattered on underside of pinnae (not in discrete sori), though tending to be more abundant toward frond centre. Description modified from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth 2000.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Leptopteris hymenophylloides* differs by its longer stipe, triangular frond, longer and broader pinnae, and by its ultimate lamina segments flattened in one plane. Where both species meet they commonly hybridise.



Heaphy track. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Heaphy track. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

## FLOWERING

N.A.

## FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

## FRUITING

N.A.

## LIFE CYCLE

Minute spores are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Rather difficult. Best results are obtained where specimens are planted in a shaded, cool, humid site in deep humus enriched soil. Plants must never be allowed to dry out. By and large this species is only suitable for specialist cultivation and it is probably best to admire it in the wild rather than to try and grow it.

## ETYMOLOGY

**leptopteris**: Thin fern; from the Greek leptos and pteris

**superba**: Superb

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 10 March 2011. Description modified from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth 2000.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Brownsey, P.J.; Smith-Dodsworth, J.C. 2000: New Zealand Ferns and Allied Plants. Auckland, David Bateman  
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

## CITATION

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## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/leptopteris-superba/>