

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

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (from Waipoua Forest south but scarce north of Auckland), South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura.

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.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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, 0.25–0.1 m long × 80–250 mm wide, dark emerald green, woolly hairy, veins free. **Primary pinnae** in 35–60 pairs, crowded, basal pinnae 5–10 mm long. **Ultimate segments** linear, sticking up at 90° 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, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Heaphy track. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

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 PJ, Smith-Dodsworth JC. 2000. New Zealand Ferns and Allied Plants. David Bateman, Auckland, NZ. 168 p.

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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