Leucogenes grandiceps

COMMON NAMES
South Island edelweiss

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

FLOWER COLOURS
White, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Perennial tomentose herb. Stock rather stout, woody; stems decumbent, woody at base, branches ascending; basal leaves not in subrosettes. Leaves densely to somewhat laxly imbricate, spreading, sometimes recurved, 5-10 × 2-4 mm, often apiculate, 3-5-nerved at base, obovate-cuneate, clad on both surfaces in appressed white to pale buff hairs. Peduncles hardly differentiated from branchlets. Capitula 5-15, congested into dense glomerules 9-15 mm diameter, subtended by up to 15 densely woolly leaves up to 10 mm long, forming a distinct white ray. Involucral bracts linear, acute, c.5 mm long, scarious with basal stiffening. Achenes c.1 mm. long, pappus-hairs 3-4 mm long



Countess Range. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Routeburn Track, Fiordland. Photographer: John Sawyer, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Distinguished from Leucogenes leontopodium (Hook.f.) Beauverd by the more widely creeping growth habit; by the basal leaves not crowded into sub-rosettes; by the smaller leaves (5-10 cf. 8-20 mm long) with obtuse (rarely apiculate) rather than acute to subacute leaf apices; and by the leaves of the ray rarely > 10 mm long. Distinguished from L. neglecta Molloy and L. tarahaoa Molloy by its diploid (2n = 28), rather than tetraploid (2n = 56, L. neglecta) or octoploid (2n = 112) chromosome number. Leucogenes neglecta further differs from L. grandiceps by its long thin stems, narrowly elliptic acute leaves and floral bracts, and uniform silvery-blue colour, while L. tarahaoa differs by its compact, cushion forming habit, and silvery white leaves.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: South and Stewart Islands

HABITAT
Subalpine to alpine. On rock outcrops, cliff faces, boulders within moraines, fell field and other rock strewn ground, either in the open, amongst cushion plants or in light scrub.

GENUS
Leucogenes

FAMILY
Asteraceae

AUTHORITY
Leucogenes grandiceps (Hook.f.) Beauverd

SYNONYMS
Gnaphalium grandiceps Hook.f., Helichrysum grandiceps (Hook.f.) Kirk

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
November - March

FRUITING
January - April

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Pappate cypselae are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from cuttings and fresh seed. Excellent in a pot within an alpine house, and in non-humid climates can be grown in rock gardens. Provided the root stock is kept cool can be grown in most lowland situations.

CULTIVATION
Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

ETYMOLOGY
leucogenes: White genus
grandiceps: Big-headed

NVS CODE
LEUGRA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 28

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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
Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085
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.

ATTRIBUTION

Description modified from Allan (1961)

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/leucogenes-grandiceps/

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