

Mazus novaezeelandiae subsp. *impolitus* f. *hirtus*

COMMON NAMES

dwarf musk, swamp musk

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: Sp

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial, creeping herb, forming compact leafy patches. Leaves 10-45 x 4-16 mm, dull, dark green or red-green, elliptic, narrow-elliptic, or narrow-obovate, thin, margin undulate, distinctly hairy, with a prominent brown marginal band. Inflorescences lateral on short branches, 2-8-flowered. Flowers initially pale lilac or lavender fading to white after anthesis. Peduncle 20-60 mm, pale green to brown-green, glabrous. Pedicel 4.5-40 mm, pale green to green. Calyx 3-5 mm, campanulate, green to brown-green, usually hairy, teeth 1.5-2.5 mm, narrow-triangular. Corolla 7-14.5 x 7.8-14 mm, prominently lobed. Tube 3-5 mm, lower lobes 2-6 x 3-5 mm, rounded, spreading or overlapping, middle lobe smaller than lateral lobes. Palate comprising 2 longitudinal ridged. Upper lobes 1-6.5 mm, narrow-triangular, apex subacute. Fruit 6-6.5 x 2.5-3.5 mm, ovoid, green, persistent. Seeds 0.4-0.8 x 0.4-0.5 mm, brown to purple-brown, surface reticulate.

SIMILAR TAXA

Because of its flower colour and hairy leaves *Mazus pumilio* is similar but this species has blue or lilac flowers and a finely toothed leaf margin. This predominantly Australian species is known in New Zealand from only one site in Northland, but is now sold by many garden centres as *M. novaezeelandiae*. It differs from *M. novaezeelandiae* subsp. *novaezeelandiae*, and subsp. *impolitus* by its consistently hairy leaf margins.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island. Formerly recorded from nine sites from western Northland (Te Pahi, Kaitaia south to the Hokianga Harbour), the Waikato (near Mercer) and in scattered sites near East Cape. It is now only known with certainty from three sites. One at Awanui near Kaitaia, at Hautai Beach, and Waipapa Stream near East Cape.

HABITAT

Lowland swamp forest, and sparsely-vegetated coastal wetlands. Preferring sites free from tall, dense sedges and grasses, often in locations seasonally flooded with water or heavily browsed by cattle (so as to exclude taller vegetation).



East Cape, December. Photographer: John Sawyer, Licence: CC BY-NC.



East Cape, December. Photographer: John Sawyer, Licence: CC BY-NC.

THREATS

Very susceptible to disturbance, habitat clearance and modification including stock trampling. Although herbarium specimens indicate it was once widespread through northern New Zealand, at present it is known from just two locations, one near Kaitaia and one near East Cape. At both sites it is threatened by competition from taller, faster growing weeds. Only one site, that near Kaitaia, is protected, and here ironically it is now seriously threatened because the forest remnant in which it was found had to be fenced as a condition of its formal protection. Fencing excluded stock (which in the long term would have destroyed the forest), allowing taller, aggressive weeds to take over the open, damp ground in which swamp musk had been common.

GENUS

Mazus

FAMILY

Mazaceae

AUTHORITY

Mazus novaezeelandiae subsp. *impolitus* f. *hirtus* Heenan

SYNONYMS

None.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October - May

FRUITING

January - July

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from division of whole plants. Fresh seed germinates easily. Does best when grown on a permanently damp or poorly drained soil in partial shade. It makes an excellent ground cover but is intolerant of competition from taller weeds such as grasses.

ETYMOLOGY

mazus: Tear (after protuberance on throat of flower)

novaezeelandiae: Of New Zealand

impolitus: Unpolished, matt

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 38

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: Sp

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: Sp

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Heenan, P. B. 1998: *Mazus novaezeelandiae* (Scrophulariaceae): taxonomy, distribution, habitats, and conservation. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 36(3): 407-416.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 October 2003. Description adapted from Heenan (1998).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/mazus-novaezeelandiae-subsp-impolitus-f-hirtus/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/mazus-novaezeelandiae-subsp-impolitus-f-hirtus/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026