

Mentha cunninghamii

COMMON NAME

New Zealand mint, hīoi

SYNONYMS

Mentha consimilis Colenso

FAMILY

Lamiaceae

AUTHORITY

Mentha cunninghamii Benth.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

MENCUN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 72$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: PD

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, South Island, Chatham Islands and Stewart Island/Rakiura.

HABITAT

Coastal to alpine. Sparse component of grassland and other open places such as cliffs, river banks, lake sides, grey scrub, occasionally in swampy ground.

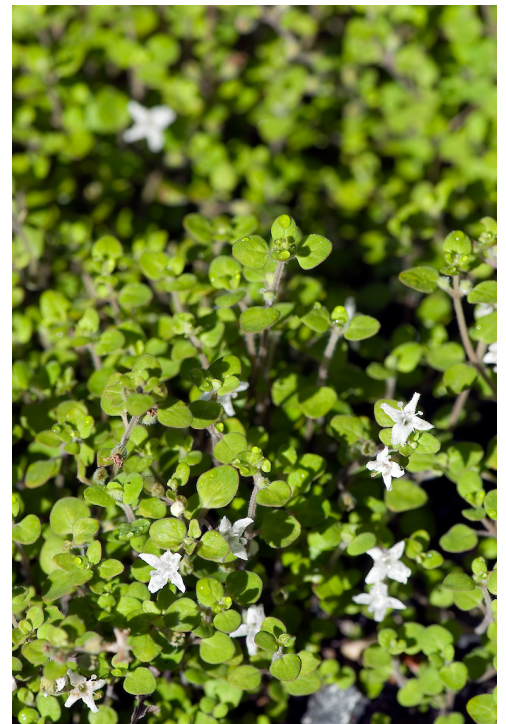
WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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



cult. ex Awhitu Peninsula, 11 Dec 2004.
Photographer: Mike Wilcox, Licence: All rights reserved.



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe,
Date taken: 15/03/2007, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Gynodioecious, rhizomatous to ± stoloniferous, perennial forming loose patches up to 300 mm across. **Stems** sparse to numerous, very slender, purple to purple-red, puberulent (especially on angles), initially ± creeping, subscandent or ascending at tips, usually much branched. **Leaves** bright green to yellow-green, sessile or with short hairy petioles 2–4 mm long; lamina 2–15 × 2–15 mm, broad-ovate to suborbicular, smooth, entire or shallowly crenate, gland-dotted, mostly glabrous except for nerves on lower surface; base broad-cuneate or truncate; apex rounded. **Flowers** axillary, fragrant, solitary or in clusters of 1–3; pedicels prominent, puberulent. **Calyx** 3–4 mm long, narrow-campanulate to campanulate, villous, gland-dotted; teeth narrow-triangular, ciliate, much < tube, acute. **Corolla** c. 6 mm long, white, glabrous; tube not exerted; lobes spreading, subequal; uppermost lobe ± 2-fid. **Stamens** scarcely exerted. **Nutlets** 1.0–1.3 mm long, ± broad-ellipsoid, slightly angled, smooth.

SIMILAR TAXA

Quite unlike any of the adventive *Mentha* species in NZ. When examining closely a sward of native turf-forming species, the presence of *M. cunninghamii* is often detected by its mint odour.

FLOWERING

October–April

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

October–June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces and fresh seed. Needs full sun to flourish. Once established tolerant of a range of conditions. An attractive pot plant.

THREATS

Habitat degradation by livestock, irrigation, drainage; weed competition.

ETYMOLOGY

mentha: Mint

cunninghamii: Named after Allan Cunningham (1791–1839) who was an English botanist and explorer, primarily known for his travels to Australia (New South Wales) and New Zealand to collect plants. Author of *Florae Insularum Novae Zelandiae Precursor*, 1837–40 (Introduction to the flora of New Zealand).

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 June 2013).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/mentha-cunninghamii/>