

Plantago obconica

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)



CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Small rosette-forming prostrate herb, presumably perennial. Primary root short-lived, dying to leave a circular root scar cavity 4-5 mm diameter, a circle of adventitious roots developing around the scar periphery. Stem very short, simple, with tuft of pale brown hairs 6-8 mm long. Leaves sessile, c.10.0-36.0 × 0.4-1.8 mm, subulate or linear-subulate, thick, with lower surface rounded and upper surface slightly concave, entire and glabrous or with scattered obtuse teeth which are often hairy, these hairs usually sparse except towards base. Flowers solitary on a short ± appressed hairy scape 1-8 mm long, elongating to c. 3-11 mm in fruit, almost hidden by long stem hairs. Bracts 2-4 mm long, broad ovate-elliptic, membranous except for herbaceous keel, glabrous. Calyx 3.5-5.0 × c.2.0 mm; segments + elliptic, membranous except for herbaceous keel, narrow, glabrous. Corolla 4-5 mm long, membranous; lobes 1.7-2.5 mm long, elliptic to ovate; often appearing lanceolate because of inrolled margins. Stamens 3-5 mm long; anthers apiculate. Ovary with 820 ovules; style 6-10 mm long, glandular-scaly, and rather densely hairy. Capsule 4.5-11.0 × 2.0-3.5 mm diameter across base of cap (across area of dehiscence), ± ellipsoid; basal part usually 3-9 mm long, obconic or funnelform, conspicuous and persistent; dehiscent cap 1.2-2.0 mm high, obversely campanulate. Seeds 5-11, including several aborted ones, normal ones 1.0-1.9 × 0.7-1.2 mm, ± ellipsoid or ovoid-ellipsoid but tending irregular, rather flattened.

SIMILAR TAXA

Allied to *P. triandra* Bergg. from which it differs by the very large, rather conspicuous, funnelform (obconic) capsule, smaller, finer subulate leaves, fewer seeds, and different chromosome number ($2n = 12$ cf. $2n = 48$ in *P. triandra*).

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Marlborough, Canterbury and Central Otago).

HABITAT

Subalpine to alpine (1500-1800 m. a.s.l.) where it grows in acidic bogs with other small herbs, often in areas subject to flooding, often for protracted periods.

THREATS

An apparently naturally uncommon, high elevation, biologically sparse species. However, because it is so small it is easily overlooked, and it is probably more widespread than is currently known. Further survey to ascertain an exact status is much desired.

GENUS

Plantago

FAMILY

Plantaginaceae

AUTHORITY

Plantago obconica Sykes

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January - March

FRUITING

February - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Unknown

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ETYMOLOGY

plantago: Old Latin name for flat-leaved plants

obconica: Inverted cone

NVS CODE

PLAOBC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 12

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR, Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Sparse

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NR, NS, NStr, RR, St
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

Sykes, W.R. 1988: Notes on New Zealand Plantago species. New Zealand Journal of Botany 26: 321-323

ATTRIBUTION

Description based on Sykes (1988).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/plantago-obconica/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026