

# Pteris cretica

## COMMON NAMES

Cretan brake

## BIOSTATUS

Exotic

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Large terrestrial fern. **Rhizome** short-creeping; scales minute, dark brown. **Fron**ds dimorphic, clustered. **Stipes** 0.25–0.9 m long, yellow-brown, glabrous. **Lamina** 0.2–0.6 × 0.1–0.4 m, dark green (occasionally variegated) broadly oblong to oblong, 1-pinnate, often incompletely 2-pinnate (forked) at the base; primary pinnae in 2–7 widely spaced pairs, somewhat ascending, narrowly lanceolate, linear to linear-falcate, tapering to apices and long-acuminate with smooth or minutely denticulate margins, chartaceous, glabrous; rachis not winged or slightly winged at apex. **Lower pinnae** short-stalked, in mature plants with 1–3 posterior short-stalked free conform pinnules. **Upper pinnae** sessile, uppermost adnate to rachis. **Terminal pinna** slightly contracted; apex of sterile pinna, sharply dentate. **Veins** free, simply or once-forked; false veins absent. **Sori** continuous; indusium subentire; paraphyses numerous.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from all indigenous and naturalised *Pteris* except *P. pacifica* by the 1-pinnate fronds bearing long, narrow-lanceolate, linear to linear-falcate pinnae, with the basal few pairs often forked. From the very uncommon *P. pacifica*, *P. cretica* is readily distinguished by the typically dark green rather than yellow-green fronds, and by the distal portion of the sterile pinnae margins sharply dentate. *Pteris cretica* could be confused with *P. vittata* however that species has a much narrower frond, with a distinctly longer terminal pinna, and by the pinnae which are never forked and which reduce in size toward the frond base.

## DISTRIBUTION

Naturalised. New Zealand: North and South Islands (widespread from Whangarei south to Banks Peninsula). Indigenous to the warm-temperate and tropical parts of the Old World.

## HABITAT

Coastal to montane (mostly coastal to lowland). A common weedy fern in many urban parts of New Zealand but also common in less modified areas growing in dense forest, along river, stream and gully banks, on track and roadside cuttings. It can be very common in wasteland areas within cities and towns, and often appears on retaining walls, and even under houses (provided there is some light).

## GENUS

*Pteris*



Auckland. Feb 2007. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Abaxial surface of frond showing sori continuous along margins. Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 02/10/2016, Licence: CC BY.

## FAMILY

Pteridaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Pteris cretica* L.

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## YEAR NATURALISED

1881

## ORIGIN

Tropics and temperate regions

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

*Pteris cretica* is commonly cultivated and exists in a diverse range of forms which include the usually dark green plants, as well as variegated ones and those whose pinnae apices are much divided (i.e. "crested"). It is an aggressive fern that rapidly spreads and probably should not be cultivated anymore as it rapidly spreads from garden environments into indigenous habitats, especially coastal and lowland forest, along river, stream, and gully sides, and even wetlands. *Pteris cretica* is remarkably tolerant of a range of conditions but does best when planted in a semi-shaded to shaded site in a deep, humus enriched, moist soil.

## ETYMOLOGY

**pteris:** A fern known to the ancient Greeks; from the Greek pteris

## ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

**This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC.** 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

## NVS CODE

PTECRE

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

Kramer KU, McCarthy PM. 1998. Pteridaceae. *Flora of Australia 48, Ferns Gymnosperms and allied groups*: 241–248. ABR/CSIRO Victoria, Australia.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared for NZPCN by: P.J. de Lange (18 January 2012). Description adapted from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000) and Kramer & McCarthy (1998).

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pteris-cretica/>

## PDF DATE

25 May 2026