Schizaea dichotoma

COMMON NAMES
fan fern

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, S?O
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Ferns

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Tufted, widely creeping fern forming diffuse patches in open, often semi-shaded sparsely vegetated ground; usually arising from within thick leaf litter. **Stipes** 100–350 × 1.0–1.5 mm, brown at base, green to dark green, erect, flattened, flabellate in upper portion with stipe forked 3–6–(8) times, smooth. **Laminae** at apices of stipe ends, pinnate (fertile), 2–7 mm long, bright green to yellow-green. **Pinnae** in 5–8 pairs, infolded, 2–4 mm long. (Description modified from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000)).

SIMILAR TAXA
None. The combination of the dark green, flattened, fan-shaped frond with each stipe end (of the fan) surmounted with a fertile laminae are unique to this species within the New Zealand representatives of the genus.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. New Zealand: Kermadec Islands (Raoul Island), North Island (from Te Paki south to Kawhia and Mt Maunganui, and locally around geothermally active sites around Rotorua and Taupo). Widespread from Madagascar east to Australia and across the Pacific.

HABITAT
Usually associated with lowland kauri (*Agathis australis* (D.Don.) Lindl.) forest but also found in coastal areas and offshore island under pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa* Sol. ex Gaertn.)-dominated forest (e.g., Mayor Island / Tuhua. In geothermal areas it is often found under shrubs of *Kunzea tenuicaulis* de Lange.

THREATS
Not Threatened. A naturally uncommon, biologically sparse species. It can at times be very common but it is usually found as widely scattered populations. There is little doubt that some populations have declined due to land development and other changes in the surrounding vegetation (e.g., Mt Maunganui).

GENUS
Schizaea

FAMILY
Schizaeaceae



Paihia. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 09/09/2008, Licence: CC BY.



Paihia. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 09/09/2008, Licence: CC BY.

AUTHORITY
Schizaea dichotoma (L.) J.E.Sm.

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Difficult—should not be removed from the wild

PLANT OF THE MONTH
This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for November 2018 for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY
dichotoma: Forked or divided into pairs

NVS CODE
SCHDIC

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: SO, Sp
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: SO, Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: SO
2004 | Sparse
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 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. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

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

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange July 2005. Description modified from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth 2000.

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/schizaea-dichotoma/

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27 May 2026