Senecio australis

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Herbaceous, short-lived or annual daisy. Leaves fleshy, dark green, variable (obovate, oblanceolate, lanceolate) deeply lobed or coarsely toothed. Flower heads (capitula) vase-shaped, involucral bracts 9-15, 5-6 mm long, ligules yellow, 1-5 × 1 mm, disc yellow, 4-5 mm diameter. Seeds 2.5-2.8 × 0.3-0.5 mm.

FLOWER COLOURS
Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Erect to semi-erect, heavily branched and leafy, short-lived perennial herb, (0.2-)0.8-1 m tall. Stems dark purple. Foliage dark green, glabrescent and fleshy. Lower leaves 55-75 × 25-30 mm, dark green, shortly-petiolate, obovate to oblanceolate, entire, very rarely lobed 1-2 times, apex obtuse; mid-cauline leaves 50-140 × 20-45 mm, dark green, petiolate or amplexicaul, petioles up to 10-15 mm; lamina ovate, obovate to elliptic, rarely rhomboidal, entire, coarsely dentate, or lobed 2-3 times, leaf apices obtuse; uppermost leaves smaller, lanceolate to linear or linear-spathulate, lobulate or dentate, with obtuse apices. Inflorescence a lax cyme of 3-8 capitula. Capitula urceolate. Involucral bracts (9-)13(-15), dark green, lanceolate, 5-6 mm long. Ray florets (0-)9(-12); ligules yellow, 1-5 × 1 mm; blunt-ended. Disc 4-5 mm diameter, yellow. Cypsela elliptic to oblong-elliptic 2.5-2.8 × 0.3-0.5 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA
Senecio marotiri is superficially similar. From that species S. australis can be distinguished by its basal leaves which are lyrately-lobed, cob-webby arachnoid stem, leaf and involucral hairs, urceolate (vase-shaped) capitula, shorter and fewer involucral bracts, and shorter cypsela (seeds). It has a very different nrDNA ITS sequence placing it within the lautusoid Senecio group, whilst S. marotiri is the sister species of S. quadridentatus.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. Present on Motukino (Fanal Island), Mokohinau Islands and North Eastern Great Barrier Island. Otherwise only known from the Norfolk Island group

Capitulum. In cultivation ex Fanal Island (Motukino). Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 03/11/2008, Licence: CC BY.

Cauline leaf. In cultivation ex Fanal Island (Motukino). Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 03/11/2008, Licence: CC BY.

HABITAT
In New Zealand. Offshore islands on rock ledges, in short grasses and coastal herbs growing amongst petrel and diving petrel burrows

THREATS
In New Zealand it is known from only three small populations comprising a total of 10 or so plants. It is clearly a recent arrival at these locations and during these initial stages of colonisation it remains vulnerable to a range of natural stochastic events. This species is abundant and not threatened on Norfolk Island.

GENUS
Senecio

FAMILY
Asteraceae

AUTHORITY
Senecio australis Willd.

SYNONYMS
None

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
November - April

FRUITING
November - April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easy from fresh seed. A short-lived perennial which readily self sows in suitable habitats. Does best in a sunny, exposed location, within free draining fertile soil.

ETYMOLOGY
senecio: From the Latin senex ‘old man’ (probably referring to the bearded seeds)
australis: Southern

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 80

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO
2012 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO
2009 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO
2004 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regional Non-Resident – Regional Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO 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.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (3 May 2004). Description by P.J. de Lange based on New Zealand material originally from Motukino (Fanal Island), Mokohinau Islands group.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/senecio-australis/

PDF DATE

27 May 2026