Senecio hispidulus

COMMON NAMES
fireweed

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Yellow

Achenes. Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 20/01/2007, Licence: CC BY.

Senecio hispidulus mid cauline leaves. Eastbourne. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 29/07/2006, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Annual to short-lived perennial herb up to 2 m tall. Stems erect, sparsely to moderately coarse-hairy or glabrous near base, if hairy reducing to more or less glabrous above mid stem. Mid stem leaves more or less evenly spaced and sized, 70-150 mm long, dark green to yellow green, sometimes tinged with red, narrow-ovate to lanceolate, rarely narrow-elliptic or linear, length:width (l:w) ratio 2.5-6, usually coarse-dentate to sub-pinnatisect; segments 2-5 per side predominantly in proximal two-thirds, large divisions usually in proximal half, slightly antrorse, deltoid to narrow-deltoid or occasionally sub-oblong; base auriculate with auricles divided, semiamplexicaul; margins with scattered denticulations or teeth; both surfaces coarse hairy; lower surface dark green or purple, often with weakly cobwebby hairs overlaying coarse-hairs. Uppermost leaves narrow-lanceolate or linear, l:w 5-15 (excluding auricles), lobate or appearing undissected due to rolling of lamina, often widest at auricles. Unit Inflorescence usually of many capitula; total number of capitula per stem often 50-100; overtopping marked; mature lateral peduncles mostly 7-14 mm long. Calycular bracteoles of capitula 3-6, 1.0-2.5 mm long; peduncle and margin of bracteoles more or less glabrous at anthesis; involucre 4.5-6.0 x 1.4-1.8 mm, involucral bracts 9-13, glabrous, with erect apex; stereomes of dried material moderately convex, green with minutely blackened tip. Florets 18-35, pale yellow to yellow, c.70% female; corolla-lobes deltoid, thickened apically; corolla of bisexual florets 4.5-6.0 mm long, 5-lobed; corolla-lobes of female florets 4, 0.3-0.5 mm long. Cypsela 1.5-2.2 mm long, red-brown, narrow-obloid with fine papillose hairs in lines or narrow bands, l:w ratio of hairs 3. Pappus 4-6 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA
Most frequently confused with the Acutely Threatened Senecio scaberulus. From that species it differs by its coarsely hispid, dark green rather than grey-green velutinous leaves, taller size (up to 2 m cf. 1 m in S. scaberulus) and by the cypsela which have hairs aligned longtidinally in the grooves rather than scatetred over the entire surface. The hybrid S. hispidulus x S. scaberulus is common in some locations where S. scaberulus was formerly present.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. Three Kings, North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands. Present in Australia.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane. Widespread in disturbed habitats, especially in places recently burned or cleared of indigenous vegetation. Often found as a pasture weed, and can be common in urban areas. This species was regarded as scarce in the South Island during the 1800s. It is now common in the northern two-thirds of that island though still local in the west and it is still spreading south. It seems to be a recent arrival on the Chatham Islands.

GENUS
Senecio

FAMILY
Asteraceae

AUTHORITY
Senecio hispidulus A.Rich.

SYNONYMS
Erechtites hispidula (A.Rich.) DC.

TAXONOMIC NOTES
In New Zealand two forms are present. One, represented by the oldest collections is distinctively covered in short, hispid hairs along the stems, the other is quite glabrous. The glabrous form first appeared in Northland during the late 1800s. Both forms merge in Australia.

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
August - May

FRUITING
September - July

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed. very weedy and invasive.

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

NVS CODE
SENHIS

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 60

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT 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

Thompson, I.R. 2004: Taxonomic studies of Australian *Senecio* (Asteraceae): 1. The disciform species. *Muelleria 19*: 101-214

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (12 July 2005). Description based on Thompson (2004).

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 June 2026