

Senecio kermadecensis

COMMON NAMES

Kermadec fireweed

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: EF, IE, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect annual or short-lived perennial herb. Stems usually dark maroon-purple, sometimes green. Basal leaves usually withering at flowering, apetiolate or shortly petiolate, 40–100 × 10–40mm, broadly elliptic, grey-green to bright green, sparsely to densely hispid especially on lower surface, evenly and finely dentate with dentitions increasing in depth toward leaf base; mid-cauline leaves similar, apetiolate, 30–80 × 5–30mm, broadly elliptic to elliptic, uppermost leaves smaller and narrower with few remote teeth. Inflorescence corymbose. Supplementary bracts of involucre 0–3, 1–2mm long. Involucral bracts 5–8, glabrous, 4.5–5.5mm long. Ray florets 0. Disc greenish-yellow, c. 1.5mm diameter. Cypsela subcylindric, 2.0–2.5mm long, greyish-black, scarcely narrowed or constricted at apex, with 1–3 rows of hairs in grooves between broad ribs.

SIMILAR TAXA

Only known from the Kermadec Islands where it is the only erechtioid senecio species present. Young plants are hard to distinguish from *Ageratum houstonianum*, and reliable identification can only be made with flowering specimens. The flowers of *Ageratum houstonianum* are blue those of *S. kermadecensis* are yellow-green.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to the Kermadec Islands where it has been reported only from Raoul and the nearby Meyer Islets. A specimen provisionally referred to *S. kermadecensis* from the Poor Knights Islands is best placed with *S. minimus*, which in New Zealand exists in two forms, a narrow-leaved form akin to the typical species, and a broad-leaved form, which is close to *S. kermadecensis* and appears to be a recent arrival to New Zealand from Australia. It is actively spreading in Northland. The Poor Knights collection is of that form.

HABITAT

A species of disturbed sites, requiring open or clear ground such as that created by active sea bird nesting grounds to flourish.



Seedlings, North Meyer Island, Kermadec Islands. May 2011. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Cypsela. Raoul Island from a specimen collected by Peter de Lange. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 10/05/2009, Licence: CC BY.

THREATS

Recent field surveys suggest this species is now confined to the Meyer Islets, where it is very common over a small area. Otherwise it seems to have gone extinct from Raoul Island over the last 30 years. The most likely cause of this decline seems to be the spread of the aggressive daisy *Ageratum houstonianum* Miller, which colonises the same open habitats the *Senecio* requires, is faster growing and seems to have displaced it from former and potential habitats on Raoul. *Ageratum* has now spread to the Meyer Islets, and eradication of this aggressive weed is unlikely due to the extreme vulnerability of the bird nesting grounds and burrows of those islands to collapse from human traffic.

GENUS

Senecio

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Senecio kermadecensis Belcher

SYNONYMS

Erechtites kermadecensis (Belcher) Allan

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

August to January

FRUITING

October to April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed but very cold sensitive.

ETYMOLOGY

senecio: From the Latin *senex* 'old man' (probably referring to the bearded seeds)

kermadecensis: From the Kermadec Islands

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 60$

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, EF, IE, RR

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, EF, IE, RR

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: De, DP, EF, IE, OL

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Webb CJ, Sykes WR, Garnock-Jones PJ. 1988. Flora of New Zealand, Volume IV. Naturalised Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms, Dicotyledons. Botany Division, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Christchurch, NZ. 1365 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 11 November 2008. Description based on Webb et al. (1988) supplemented with information obtained from fresh specimens and herbarium material.

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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/senecio-kermadecensis/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/senecio-kermadecensis/>

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