

Shawia lineata

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RF

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Bushy small tree bearing masses of erect square in cross-section twigs that have clusters of small very thin leaves that are white underneath inhabiting damper sites in the southern  of the South Island. Leaves 15–40 mm long by 1–2 mm wide, surface not wrinkled. Flowers small, in clusters.

FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Small tree up to 8 m tall with narrow to broad canopy crowns. **Trunk** stout, erect, solitary, sometimes several arising from the ground, up to 0.6 m d.b.h. **Bark** grey or charcoal-grey, firm, deeply furrowed, shedding in tough, corky shards. **Branches** sparse to numerous, at first ascending then widely spreading; branchlets grey to charcoal grey, more or less square and angled in cross-section, deeply and longitudinally grooved, slender, at first erect then spreading, ultimately pendulous. **Brachyblasts** 10–30 mm long distantly spaced. **Leaves** 2–10-fascicled; 20–60 × 0.4–0.8 mm, linear to very narrow-linear, upper surface dark green more or less covered with finely appressed greyish-white indument, glabrate to glabrous with age, undersides clad in soft, white to greyish-white appressed tomentum, margin often strongly revolute. **Capitula** discoid, 1–8-fascicled, 2–4–(6) mm diameter, pedicellate, pedicels up to 40 mm long; florets 6–10, off-white to white (rarely creamy yellow), involucral bracts 2–4-seriate, narrowly lanceolate to oblanceolate, undersides finely grey-white villous. **Cypselas** 1–2 mm long, compressed, finely pubescent, puberulent to glabrescent, pappus hairs 2–3 mm long, off white to buff.

SIMILAR TAXA

None - the greyish coloured branches, mature trees with typically spreading canopy crowns, numerous pendulous branchlets, finely linear, greyish-green leaves, and distinctively long pedicellate flowers are unique to this species. *Olearia lineata* cv. 'Dartonii' is a popular cultivar grown widely and often erroneously as this species; it has similar but wider green to grey-green leaves with very white undersides and a less pendulous, more narrowly erect growth habit. It seems to be a hybrid involving *Shawia lineata* and *S. traversiolum* (*O. traversiorum* (F.Muell.) Hook.f.)

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, easterly from north Canterbury south to Southland and Stewart Island/Rakiura.

HABITAT

Lowland to montane (10–300 m a.s.l.) grey scrub, tussock grassland and forest margins. Often on river terraces in or near seepages and ephemeral wetlands, on occasion even growing in shallow water. Also found on the margins of steep river gorges, and in and amongst rock outcrops, boulder field and at the toe of alluvial fans.



Southland. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 22/01/2023, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Olearia lineata Catlins. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

THREATS

Widespread and at times locally abundant (especially in some parts of Central Otago) *Olearia lineata* is otherwise often known from only widely scattered sites with few individuals. Although widespread, the majority of the known populations are not officially protected and recruitment is often lacking. *Olearia lineata*, together with the majority of eastern South Island endemic *Olearia* Sect. *Divaricaster* Heads, is the subject of a major Department of Conservation initiated Recovery Plan. As part of that work this species has been subject to intensive survey.

GENUS

Shawia

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Shawia lineata (Cockayne) Saldivia & Nicol

SYNONYMS

Olearia virgata var. *lineata* Kirk, *Olearia lineata* (Kirk) Cockayne

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November–January

FRUITING

January–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from semi-hardwood cuttings and fresh seed. A beautiful specimen tree which is very drought tolerant once established but can also tolerate waterlogged soils, and is of course extremely cold tolerant. The fine, linear, grey-green leaves and somewhat spreading pendulous branches and stout tree habit are particularly noteworthy. It deserves to be more widely cultivated than it currently is.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

shawia: After Thomas Shaw (1694-1751), English scholar and traveller.

lineata: Linear, striped with a parallel line (plumb line)

NVS CODE

OLELIN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 108

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RF

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: PD, RF

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RF, PD

2004 | Sparse

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: NStr, PD, PF, RF, Sp Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the “Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025” Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Saldivia, P.; Nicol, D.A. 2025: Reinstatement, broader circumscription, and infrageneric classification of *Shawia* (Astereae, Celmisiinae), a large woody genus endemic to Australasia. *Phytoneuron* 49: 1–43.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/shawia-lineata/>

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