

Shawia polita

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: CD, PF, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Rare widely-branched tangled shrub with reddish twigs with two ridges bearing small glossy dark-green rounded leaves that are white underneath inhabiting damp sites in the Hope Valley. Leaves 4-12mm long by 3-6mm wide, tapering abruptly to a winged stalk. Flowers small. Seeds fluffy.

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub 2-4 m tall. Branches interlacing, strongly divaricating. Bark dark red-brown maturing greyish brown. Branchlets 2-angled so forming a paired conspicuous longitudinal ridge extending along branch length. Young branchlets pubescent near tips. Internodes of long shoots 10-20(30) mm. Short shoots (brachyblasts) opposite, bearing 2-4 leaves and/or 1-5 capitula. Leaves opposite or in opposite fascicles, 4-8(-10) x 3-6(-7) mm, suborbicular, broadly obovate to spatulate, upper surface bright glossy green when fresh, glabrescent, margins red or brown, under surface coated in copious, densely appressed, short silvery white hairs, leaf apex obtuse with a minute apiculus. Petiole (0.5)1.5-3(-4) mm, reddish, narrowly winged. Juvenile leaves similar but with small denticles on leaf margins as well as apex. Capitula in clusters of (1-)2-4(-5). Florets 4-5. Achenes (seeds) 1.7-2 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

This species is readily distinguished from other small-leaved *Shawia* species by the 2-angled branchlets, and bright glossy green (appearing as if polished) upper leaf surfaces. The juvenile foliage is often deeply toothed, and this is also seen on reversion shoots.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, North West Nelson, near Wangapeka and at Glenhope.

HABITAT

Lowland, riparian Silver beech (*Lophozonia menziesii* (Hook.f.) Heenan & Smissen) forest, where it grows in the under storey.

THREATS

Threatened by browsing animals, weeds and the fact that most populations occur on private land. Recruitment is potentially limiting some populations.

GENUS

Shawia



Tadmor Saddle. May 2007. Photographer: Kelvin Lloyd, Licence: All rights reserved.



Olearia polita foliage. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Shawia polita (Wilson & Garn.-Jones) Saldivia & Nicol

SYNONYMS

Olearia polita H.D.Wilson et Garn.-Jones

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October - November

FRUITING

November to January

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and semi hardwood cuttings. Does best in semi-shade (it is an attractive shrub to plant under taller trees, particularly deciduous species) in a moist, fertile soil. The small flowers are sweetly scented, particularly at night.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

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

WHERE TO BUY

Commercially available from some specialist native plant nurseries.

ETYMOLOGY

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

polita: Smooth or polished

NVS CODE

OLEPOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 108

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: CD, RR

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: CD, RR

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: CD, RR

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Norton, D.A.; Rolfe, J.R.; Sawyer, J.W.D. 2010: Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch.

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.

Wilson, H.D.; Garnock-Jones, P. J. 1992: Two new species names in *Olearia* (Asteraceae) from New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 30(3): 365-368

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for the NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2006. Description by P.J. de Lange (adapted from Wilson & Garnock-Jones 1992) and subsequently published in de Lange et al. (2010).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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27 May 2026