Tetrachondra hamiltonii

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: Sp, DPR, DPT
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Green, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Creeping perennial herb rooting at nodes forming diffuse to dense turf-like patches. **Stems** fleshy, distinctly angled, square in cross-section, dark striped. **Leaves** opposite, 2 × 2 mm, broadly ovate to obovate-oblong, bright green or mottled with red, fleshy, sparsely covered with indistinct circular oil glands, glabrescent (leaf margins often faintly ciliolate), shortly petiolate to sessile, bases decurrent with stem. **Flowers** soliatry, off-white to greenish-white. **Calyx lobes** minute, ovate-triangular. **Corolla lobes** 4, obovate-oblong, pubescent. **Stamens and styles** 4. **Fruit** 4 brown setulose nutlets, broadly elliptic or obovate, (1)–1.1–1.4–(1.5) mm.



Tetrachondra hamiltonii. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



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

SIMILAR TAXA
Without fruits this diminutive creeping herb could be easily confused with a diverse range of other unrelated turf-forming herbs, e.g., *Nertera* spp., *Crassula* spp., *Galium* spp. However, the distinctive 4-fruited setulose nutlets immediately distinguish it from these and other potential look alikes.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (NW corner of the Ruahine Ranges), South Island (localised but widespread, with the main centre of distribution in Otago, western Southland, Fiordland), Stewart Island/Rakiura.

HABITAT
A species of open, compact turf communities such as those developed along lake and tarn margins, flushes and seepages. Occasionally found in suitably open sites within forest.

THREATS
A naturally uncommon species of open damp turf, seepages, and the marginal turf communities of lakes and tarns. Sometimes in open scrub or damp grassland. Indications are that in parts of its range it is declining, possibly as a consequence of taller, faster growing weeds spreading into the habitats it requires.

GENUS
Tetrachondra

FAMILY
Tetrachondraceae

AUTHORITY
Tetrachondra hamiltonii Petrie ex Oliv.

SYNONYMS
Tillaea hamiltonii Kirk nom. nud.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
Flowers may be found throughout the year

FRUITING
Fruits may be found throughout the year.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from the division of whole plants.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACW: Facultative Wetland
Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION
Not commercially available but plants are held by several Botanic Gardens and specialist growers. It is very easily grown but is not particularly attractive.

ETYMOLOGY
hamiltonii: Named after W. S. Hamilton (of Southland)

NVS CODE
TETHAM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 72

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, Sp
2012 | Data Deficient | Qualifiers: Sp
2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, Sp
2004 | Serious Decline
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPT, NStr, PD, RR Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The 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
Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 August 2003. Description based on Allan (1961).
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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/tetrachondra-hamiltonii/

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