

Wurmbea novae-zelandiae

COMMON NAMES

iphigenia

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Summer-green, inconspicuous bulbous herb. Plants 30-80(-100) mm tall at flowering. Corm 7(-9) x 5(-8) mm, enclosed in persistent papery sheaths. Stem annual, slender, < leaves. Leaves (1-)2(-3), 20-90(-120) x 1-2(-8) mm, linear, deeply channelled or folded, apex terete. Below the flower are 1 or 2 smaller, green or petaloid bract-like leaves. Flower solitary, terminal. Tepals 3-6, 4-5 x 1.5 - 2 mm, oblong-lanceolate, obtuse, similar, white or slightly pink. Stamens 3-6, fused to tepal base. Ovary 2.5 mm diam., subglobose, styles widely divergent, and separating with the valves of the ripe capsules. Capsule 4-6(-10) x 2-3-6 mm, oval, pericarp at first green and fleshy, becoming woody on maturity, splitting into 2-6 wide-spreading valves. Seeds orange-brown, 1 mm diam., globose.

SIMILAR TAXA

None

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to the North and South Island. In the North Island possibly extinct, having been reported twice from the Maungaharuru Range. In the South Island it only occurs east of the main divide from Canterbury to Southland.

HABITAT

Lowland to subalpine swamps, tarn and lake margins, damp seepages within tussock grasslands, and deflation hollows in alluvial outwash gravels.

THREATS

Threatened by wetland modification, drainage, and exotic weeds. Also vulnerable to browse by introduced mammals (hares) and possibly Canada geese.

GENUS

Wurmbea

FAMILY

Colchicaceae

AUTHORITY

Wurmbea novae-zelandiae (Hook.f. ex Kirk) Lekhak, Survesw. et S.R.Yadav



Mackenzie Basin. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Tākapo Scientific Reserve. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 15/02/2024, Licence: CC BY-NC-SA.

SYNONYMS

Anguillaria novae-zelandiae Hook.f., Iphigenia novae-zelandiae (Hook.f.) Baker

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November - December

FRUITING

(Dec) January - February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult and should not be removed from the wild.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

EXTRA INFORMATION

One of New Zealand's few indigenous bulb-bearing plants.

ETYMOLOGY

wurmbea: The genus Wurmbea is named after Christoph Carl Friedrich von Wurmbe (1742 - 1781), a German botanist who emigrated to Jakarta.

novae-zelandiae: Of New Zealand

NVS CODE

WURNOV

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 20

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

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

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, RR

2004 | Gradual Decline

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPS, NStr, PF, 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

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.

Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970: *Flora of New Zealand. Vol. II*. Wellington, Government Printer.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (1 August 2003). Description based on Moore & Edgar (1970) - see also de Lange et al. (2010).

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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/wurmbea-novae-zelandiae/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/wurmbea-novae-zelandiae/>

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