

Mountain plants of Wellington Conservancy

The mountains of Wellington are cloaked in a diverse mix of native plant life. Some of the more characteristic plants include silver beech (*Nothofagus menziesii*), leatherwood (*Olearia colensoi* and *Brachyglottis eleagnifolia*), snowberry (*Gaultheria antipoda*), mountain fivefinger (*Pseudopanax simplex*), broadleaf (*Griselinia littoralis*), common mountain daisy (*Celmisia spectabilis*), tree fuchsia (*Fuchsia excorticata*), snow tussock grasses (*Chionochloa pallens* and *C. flavescens*), gentian (*Gentiana bellidifolia*) and mountain flax (*Phormium cookianum*). Others are less common, such as Kirk's daisy (*Brachyglottis kirkii* var. *kirkii*) and hebe (*Hebe evenosa*). This fact sheet describes those uncommon species and how you can help conservation management of our mountain environments by recording your observations of these special plants. Wellington's mountains are young, probably no more than 2 million years old and most occur in the Tararua, Rimutaka and Aorangi Forest Parks. The highest mountain in the conservancy is Mitre Peak (1586 metres a.s.l.)



◀ *Aciphylla dissecta* (speargrass)

This plant is endemic to tussock grasslands of the montane and subalpine zone of the Tararua Range. It forms stout plants 40 cm tall. Its leaves are up to 30 cm long. It is regionally rare in Wellington.



◀ *Euphrasia drucei* (eyebright)

This root parasite is endemic to the Tararua Forest Park. It is a perennial herb, often prostrate, with stems that are woody at base. It has white flowers which occur from December to January. It occurs in boggy or open places in subalpine tussock or herbfield. It is now listed as nationally uncommon.

Wahlenbergia pygmaea subsp. *tararua* (harebell)

This plant is found only in the Tararua Range and is one of New Zealand's most threatened native species. The plant has flat leaves with 4 to 7 marginal teeth. Its flowers are white with one fine blue vein beneath each petal. It occurs in herbfields above the treeline.

◀ *Grammitis pseudociliata* (finger fern or strap fern)

This plant is an epiphyte in high-altitude forest. It has larger fronds (sometimes with scalloped edges) than *G. ciliata*. Hairs on the margins of the frond are shorter than on the surface. In Wellington Conservancy this fern is very rare.



Photos: Andrew Townsend (top);
DOC (above); Bill Malcolm
(below).





◀ ***Trichomanes strictum* (erect bristle fern)**

This fern has erect rhizomes and narrow fronds and that distinguishes it from other species of the same group. It occurs in high altitude forests and streamsides in coastal and montane forest. It is now listed as a nationally uncommon plant.

Olearia lacunosa* var. *alpina ▶
(lancewood tree daisy)

This shrub occurs in lowland to subalpine forest and is believed to be a varietal form of *O. lacunosa* (found in South Island). It grows up to 5 m tall and its leaves are 7-17 cm long and up to 2.5 cm wide. It flowers from November to February.



◀ ***Peraxilla tetrapetala* (red-flowered mistletoe)**

A shrub up to 2 m across, red-flowered mistletoe is a parasite on black, red, hard and silver beech. It has characteristic small, raised blisters on small leaves. Veins are hardly evident and only the midrib is conspicuous. Flowers are bright red and occur from October to January. This species is undergoing a decline nationally.

◀ ***Peraxilla colensoi* (scarlet mistletoe)**

Scarlet mistletoe was recently re-discovered in the Tararua Range. It is a hemiparasite, in Wellington usually on silver beech. It forms clumps up to 4 m across. Leaves are large, thick with a leathery texture, and never blistered. They occur in opposite pairs. Veins are hardly evident. Scarlet flowers make this plant conspicuous from October to January. It is undergoing a decline nationally.



Photos: David Norton (above);
John Smith-Dodsworth (centre,
top); Barbara Mitcalfe (top right);
Andrew Townsend (centre right);
Olaf John (bottom right).

Brachyglottis kirkii* var. *kirkii ▶
(Kirk's tree daisy)

This shrub is usually found in high-altitude beech forest growing as a low epiphyte on rimu and rata. However, it also grows on the ground in manuka scrub and forest. Its leaves are fleshy and the plant often reaches 4 m tall. It is the host of the weevil *Praolepra albopictus*.



***Hebe evenosa* (hebe)**

Another species endemic to the Tararua Range, *Hebe evenosa* grows up to 2 m tall with stout, widely-spreading main branches. The flowers are white and occur from January to February. It occurs in the upper edge of the forest belt.



How you can help

*Please send information
about the distribution of
the plants described here
to the Department of*

*Conservation,
PO Box 5086, Wellington.
Tel. 04-472 5821.*

*No native plants should be
collected from mountain
areas without a permit or
permission from the
landowner.*

***More
information***

More information about mountain vegetation in Wellington may be obtained from:
A.F. Mark, N.M. Adams. 1995. New Zealand alpine plants. Godwit Publishing Ltd.
Auckland, New Zealand.

J. Dawson, R. Lucas. 1996. New Zealand coast & mountain plants: their communities and lifestyles. Victoria University Press. Wellington, New Zealand.

I. Gabites. 1993. Wellington's Living Cloak: A guide to the natural plant communities. Wellington Botanical Society and Victoria University Press. Wellington, New Zealand.