

# Centipeda minima subsp. minima

## COMMON NAMES

sneezeweed, centipeda

## SYNONYMS

Myriogyne minuta (G.Forst.) Less., Cotula minuta G.Forst, Centipeda orbicularis Lour.,

## FAMILY

Asteraceae

## AUTHORITY

Centipeda minima (L.) A.Braun et Asch. subsp. minima

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 20

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP, EF, RR, SO, Sp

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: EF, SO

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: SO, EF

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: Kermadecs (Raoul Island), and North Island. The majority of historic records unsupported by herbarium specimens have to be regarded as unreliable due to confusion with three other species recently recognised in New Zealand, the endemic *C. aotearoana*, and indigenous *C. cunninghamii* and *C. elatinoides*. Recent confirmed records of *C. minima* have come recently from Raoul Island (May 2011) and from the North Island, from about the Waikato and Bay of Plenty north. Present also in Australia, India, Russia, China, Japan, Malesia and on some Pacific Islands.

## HABITAT

Wet, or partially dried out lake, pond and stream margins. Often in coastal areas. This species requires open sparsely vegetated ground. It cannot tolerate any competition, so grows in the most open sites it can find (wet or dry). The largest recently discovered populations in New Zealand come from rubbish dumps, poorly draining foot paths, and muddy ground associated with poorly drained airstrips.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).



Te Arai, 2003. Photographer: Bec Stanley, Licence: CC BY-SA.



Ex cult Great Barrier Island. Photographer: Bec Stanley, Licence: CC BY-SA.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Aromatic, usually prostrate, annual, bright green, spreading herb up to 250 mm diam and 200 mm high. Branches numerous, spreading, frequently rooting from lower leaf nodes, glabrescent or finely covered in cottony, wispy hairs. Leaves spatulate, rhomboidal 3-27 mm x 1.5-11 mm, light green to dark green, never glaucescent, usually glabrescent sometimes cottony hairy, lamina margin serrated with 1-4 pairs of teeth, these usually confined to the upper third of lamina. Inflorescence a solitary, sessile to subsessile, axillary, leaf opposed capitulum. Capitula hemispherical to subglobular, 1.5-5 mm diam., greenish-yellow; involucre bracts obovate, 1-1.6 mm, receptacle convex; corolla of female flowers 0.1-0.25 mm, bisexual florets 0.3-0.4 mm. Fruiting heads disarticulating at maturity. Cypselas narrowly obcuneate, 0.6-1.5 mm, truncate or obtuse, with 4-8 ribs bearing short antrorse bristles, uniting as a pale, pithy apical cap in distal quarter.

## SIMILAR TAXA

The three other indigenous species *Centipeda aotearoana*, *C. cunninghamii*, and *C. elatinoides* are much larger usually perennial plants. From these *C. minima* subsp. *minima* is distinguished by its small size, usually annual habit, bright green, kite-shaped leaves that are < 10 mm long and usually less than 3 x times as wide, and which are only sparingly (though deeply) toothed toward the leaf apex.

## FLOWERING

(August-) December (-May)

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

## FRUITING

(August-) December (-May)

## LIFE CYCLE

Cypselas dispersed by wind, attachment and granivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

A strict annual that is easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Once established it regularly self-sows in suitable habitats and can at times become invasive. It makes an ideal semi-permanent ground cover, for poorly draining lawns, where in ideal conditions the plants rapid growth and frequent turn over can provide an excellent, pleasantly fragrant alternative to lawn grasses, without the need for mowing. For a more permanent cover try mixing it in with *Cotula* (*Leptinella* spp.).

## THREATS

The major threats come from aggressive wetland weeds, such as Mercer grass (*Paspalum distichum*), which rapidly smothers the open muddy ground this species favours. This species is weedy and opportunistic and so can potentially be found anywhere there is suitably open, muddy, ground.

## ETYMOLOGY

**centipeda:** From the Greek word for one hundred feet

**minima:** Very small

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for August 2006](#) for the full story.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 5 May 2005. Description adapted from Walsh (2001).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285-309  
Walsh, N. G. 2001: A revision of *Centipeda* (Asteraceae). *Muelleria* 15: 33-64.

### **NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION**

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/centipeda-minima-subsp-minima/> (Date website was queried)

### **MORE INFORMATION**

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/centipeda-minima-subsp-minima/>

### **PDF DATE**

17 September 2024