

Drosera pygmaea

COMMON NAMES

pygmy sundew

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Diminutive, annual to biennial, dark red, bright green or yellow-green plants forming rosettes 5–20 mm diameter. **Gemma** 40–70 per plant, 0.7–0.8 × 0.6 mm, reniform, flattened, dark red or green; appearing February–June. **Leaves** 6–12, radical; stipules 1.1–5.0 × 0.5–0.9 mm, attached to base of upper petiole surface, laciniate, hyaline to silvery-white, trifid, central lobe cut 2–3 times, lateral lobes 2-pointed; petiole 3–6 × 0.4–0.5 mm, linear, narrowing towards lamina, glabrous; lamina 1.5–2.0 × 2.0–2.6 mm, subpeltate, peltate, suborbicular to orbicular, dark red, bright green, or yellow-green, upper surface deeply concave, glandular hairs 1.5–2.8 mm. **Inflorescence** scapigerous; scapes 5.0–18.0 × 0.2 mm, erect, wiry, dark red, bright green or yellow-green, surface sparsely glandular-papillate. **Flowers** 1–per scape, 3 mm diameter, tetramerous, white, scentless. **Sepals** 4, 1.0–0.6 mm, obovate, upper ½ irregularly toothed, dark red, green or green-red, glabrous. **Petals** 4, 1.5–1.8 × 1.2–1.4 mm, narrowly obovate to obovate, white. **Stamens** 4, 0.6–0.8 mm, filaments white, anthers light yellow. **Fruit** 1.6 × 1.4 mm, orbicular, orbicular-obovate, dark red, green or green-red, containing up to 40 seeds. **Seeds** 0.4 × 0.25 mm, ovoid, black, surface deeply scalariform.

SIMILAR TAXA

The much more common and large *D. spatulata* is often confused with *D. pygmaea*. From *D. spatulata*, *D. pygmaea* can be immediately recognised by the prominent, erect tuft of stipules, which are much longer than the associated leaves.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island (Te Paki to about Dargaville, west of Auckland, near Waiouru), South Island (near Bluff Hill). It is probably present elsewhere but its small size and often reddish colouration makes it difficult to see in the open, clay pans and peaty ground it favours. Australia (common).

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine. Usually in gumland and pakihi shrublands and adjoining wetlands, especially peat bogs. Also present on seasonally damp clay pans developed over ultramafic soils. This species requires open ground and will not long persist in the presence of other taller plants.



Locally common on dune lake turfs, Waipapakauri Far North. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 13/02/2025, Licence: CC BY.



Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 22/05/2020, Licence: CC BY-NC.

THREATS

At serious risk over much of its known range from wetland drainage and the spread of larger, faster growing weeds. Probably extinct in the Auckland area due to drain clearance and road maintenance. Still common from Kaitaia and Doubtless Bay north, though here too many of its key habitats are either drained, being drained or are vulnerable to spread of taller and faster growing weeds. Land development is also leading to populations being destroyed. Recent reports suggest it is still persisting in areas on the Volcanic Plateaus in the central North island.

GENUS

Drosera

FAMILY

Droseraceae

AUTHORITY

Drosera pygmaea DC.

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–March

FRUITING

December–May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Minute seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult and should not be removed from the wild.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for April 2024](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

drosera: Dewy

pygmaea: Tiny

NVS CODE

DROPYG

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Relict | Qualifiers: DP, SO

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, SO

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

2004 | Gradual Decline

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Extirpated | Qualifiers: EW Help

Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland](#)" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

Northland: 2026 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPS DPT PF SO Help

Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau](#)" Ford et al. 2026 report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange PJ, Heenan PB, Norton DA, Rolfe JR, Sawyer JWD. 2010. Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch. 471 p.

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

Salmon B. 2001. Carnivorous plants of New Zealand. Ecosphere Publications, Auckland, NZ. 303 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2008). Description based on Salmon (2001), live and herbarium specimens - see also de Lange et al. (2010).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/drosera-pygmaea/>

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