

Schizaea bifida

COMMON NAMES

forked comb fern

BIOSTATUS

Native

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizomatous, tufted fern. **Rhizome** short-creeping, densely clothed with glossy pale to dark brown hairs. **Fron**ds clustered, erect, 70–550 mm long, 0.6–1.2 mm wide, subterete, furrowed on 1 side or flattened, smooth to scabrid, undivided or dichotomously divided 1 or more times, pubescent at first, becoming smooth or scabrid; sterile fronds shorter and more divided than sporogenous ones or, more rarely, absent; sporogenous heads ovate-triangular to obliquely oblong, 5–30 mm long, 2–4x longer than broad, broadest near the base, tapering distally, often recurved; segments 5–12 mm long, smooth to scabrid; margins with long, brown hairs. **Sporangia** mixed with pale brown hairs. (Description from Chinnock (1998))

SIMILAR TAXA

Undivided forms of *Schizaea bifida* are distinguished from *Microschizaea fistulosa* (with which it often grows) by the sporogenous heads which are glabrous, and which are shorter and broader, with the lower most pair of segments the longest. Divided forms of *Schizaea bifida* are easily distinguished from *S. dichotoma* by the sterile and fertile frond segments not arranged in a fan-shape.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island (Te Pahi to Lake Taupo and East Cape, Wellington), South Island (North-west Nelson to Westport). Also Australia and New Caledonia.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane—mostly in open clay pans and shrubland (especially gumland scrub). Often in drought-prone habitats. However, on occasion *Schizaea bifida* has also been collected from restiad peat bogs. It is also locally common in geothermal areas where it grows amongst moss and in open shrubland.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

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DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Schizaeaceae



Close up of immature sporangia (which is glabrous). Auckland, Waitemata Harbour, Kauri Point (Kendall Bay). Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Date taken: 16/12/2021, Licence: CC BY.



Roadside bank near frost-flat; Tawarau Forest, King Country. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 17/11/1980, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Schizaea bifida Willd.

SYNONYMS

Acrostichum bifida (Willd.) Poir

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

Not applicable—spore producing

FRUITING

Not applicable—spore producing

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—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).

OTHER INFORMATION

NVS CODE

SCHBIF

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 154

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Chinnock, R.J. 1998: Schizaeaceae. *Flora of Australia* 48: 177–187.

Chinnock R.J. 1998. Schizaeaceae. *Flora of Australia 48, Ferns Gymnosperms and allied groups*: 177–187.

ABRS/CSIRO Victoria, Australia.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 March 2011.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/schizaea-bifida/>

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17 March 2025