

Asplenium trichomanes

COMMON NAME

spleenwort

SYNONYMS

Asplenium melanolepis Colenso; *Chamaefilix trichomanes* (L.) Farw.;
Asplenium trichomanes var. *melanolepis* (Colenso) C.Chr.;

FAMILY

Aspleniaceae

AUTHORITY

Asplenium trichomanes L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

NVS CODE

ASPTRI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 216

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island (from near Waro (north of Whangarei) south though often local), South Island. Known from a few collections from Australia.

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine. Favouring sparsely vegetated, sunny sites on base-rich rocks such as limestone, basalt, schist or the apatite-rich facies of greywacke rock. In the North Island it is virtually confined to calcareous rock and soil.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Plants hexaploid. **Rhizome** stout, erect, bearing dark brown subulate scales up to 5 mm long. **Stipes** 10–100 mm long, dark brown, shining, stiff, lacking scales except at the very base. **Laminae** linear, 50–300 mm long, dark green, sub-coriaceous, pinnate. **Raches** dark brown, shining, stiff, lacking scales. **Pinnae** sub-sessile, 15–25 (or more) pairs, oblong to ± orbicular, crenate-serrate to ± entire, 2–10 × 1–5 mm. Sori up to 3 mm long. **Spores** 39–47 µm long. 2n = 216.



Takaka hill. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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SIMILAR TAXA

Easily recognised by the stiff and erect, simply pinnate fronds which are < 30 mm wide; bearing > 8 pairs pinnae; and by the brown stipe and rachis which is completely without scales. Two cryptic subspecies exist, one (the entity described in this Fact Sheet) hexaploid ($2n = 216$) and the other (*A. trichomanes* subsp. *quadrivalens* Meyer) tetraploid ($2n = 144$).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a pot, or in a crevice within a rock wall. Does best on a base-rich substrate such as limestone or basalt (or mortar within a brick wall). Prone to attacks from scale, mealy bugs and aphids.

ETYMOLOGY

asplenium: From the Greek a- 'without' and splene 'spleen', a northern hemisphere species, the black spleenwort (*Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*), was once believed to be a cure for diseases of the spleen.

trichomanes: From the ancient Greek name used by Theophrastus and Dioscorides, for a type of fern; refers to the slender hair projecting from each spore case

WHERE TO BUY

Not Commercially Available.

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

New Zealand plants are hexaploid and are distinct from the type (in Europe) which is diploid. At this stage we refer them to *A. trichomanes*, though at a later date they may receive a new name at either the rank of species or subspecies.

ATTRIBUTION

Description from: Brownsey (1977).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Brownsey P.J. 1977. A taxonomic revision of the New Zealand species of *Asplenium*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 15(1): 39–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1977.10429618>.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/asplenium-trichomanes/>