

Celmisia major var. major

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Celmisia major Cheeseman var. *major*

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

NVS CODE

CELMVM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 108

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: PD, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: PD, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: HI

2004 | Gradual Decline

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island: West Auckland (Muriwai to Cornwallis (formerly Laingholm), Great Barrier Island (near Fitzroy – apparently extinct), Kaikoura Island, Aiguilles Island.

HABITAT

Strictly coastal, on rock headlands, cliff faces, and islets, where it usually grows in low turf on peaty or silty soils with *Disphyma*, *Tetragonia* and *Samolus*. Occasionally found in coastal shrublands.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted herb. Leaves (100-150-200(-400) x (5-)10(-20) mm, narrow-linear to lanceolate, tapering from sheath to an acute apex, sulcate, and plicate in cross-section, leathery, upper surface dark green, pellicle thin, often fracturing into irregular shards, leaving leaves with a somewhat silvery green, mottled appearance. Lower leaf surface densely clad in silvery white appressed hairs, midrib distinct and glabrescent. Leaf sheath pale, membranous, 60 mm long, nerves distinct, red or dark red, margins clad in floccose hairs. Inflorescence scape stout, long persistent, 200 mm or more in length, pellicled to floccose (cottony). Capitula 20-40 mm diam., phyllaries 20 mm, linear-subulate, acuminate, ciliate, glabrous on upper surface. Ray-florets white, numerous, 20 mm long. Disk florets yellow, 9 mm, funnellform, teeth narrow-triangular. Achenes narrow-cylindric, grooved, glabrescent 6-7 mm, pappus hairs 8 mm, white, slender, somewhat barbellate.



Whatipu (December). Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Whatipu (December). Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

The taxonomy of northern lowland *Celmisia* spp. (all allied to the variable *C. gracilentata* and *C. graminifolia* complexes) is in need of revision. Accurate distinction of *C. major* from its allies is difficult, and currently the treatment offered in Allan (1961, *Flora of New Zealand* Vol. 1) will not adequately distinguish this species from other variants within the complex. Within its range, *C. major* is the only species which occurs within lowland coastal habitats.

FLOWERING

(August-) October-November (-February)

FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

FRUITING

(October-) December (-May)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and the division of whole plants. Prefers moist soils, with a sunny aspect, free from weeds
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THREATS

Habitat loss through the encroachment of taller and faster growing weeds, and coastal erosion. Several accessible populations have been damaged by trampling through human traffic to access popular viewing sites on headlands and near shore islets. Some sites have vanished altogether through, it would seem, overcollecting. Apparently always scarce on Great Barrier Island, this daisy now only persists in that island group in a single site on a very remote northerly location.

ETYMOLOGY

celmisia: Apparently named after Kelmis, one of Idaean Dactyls, a group of skilled mythical beings associated with the Mother Goddess Rhea in Greek mythology. Kelmis, whose name means 'casting', was a blacksmith and childhood friend of Zeus, son of Rhea and later king of the gods. In Ovid's 'Metamorphoses', Kelmis is described as offending Zeus who turned him into adamant so he was as hard as a tempered blade

major: Greater

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

Field work and herbarium evidence suggests that *C. major* is more closely linked to *C. adamsii* var. *rugulosa*, which in turn seems to be a later heterotypic synonym for *C. graminifolia* Hook.f., itself a much misunderstood species. The status of *C. major* var. *brevis*, an Mt Egmont endemic is not clear, it is certainly not close to var. *major*. Further critical study into this matter is urgently needed.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 February 2009). Description adapted from Allan (1961)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: *Flora of New Zealand*. Vol. I, Government Printer, Wellington.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/celmisia-major-var-major/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/celmisia-major-var-major/>