

Leptinella dispersa subsp. dispersa

SYNONYMS

Cotula dispersa D.G.Lloyd, *Cotula dispersa* D.G.Lloyd subsp. *dispersa*

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Leptinella dispersa subsp. *dispersa* (D.G.Lloyd) D.G. Lloyd et C.Webb

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 52

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

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

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island (from Te Aupouri (Mt Camel) south), South Island and Stewart Island/Rakiura.

HABITAT

Lowland, usually coastal, on stream and lake margins or on the margins of freshwater swamps and wetlands bordering saltmarsh, sometimes in deep hollows or on shaded cliff faces. On occasion this species has been found on cattle pugged swampy ground bordering saltmarshes. Intolerant of much shading and grass competition it favours open sites. In the southern North Island it often grows with *L. tenella* (A.Cunn.) D.G.Lloyd et C.Webb.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).



Close up, the pin is 1mm across. Photographer: Ian and Jocelyn Bell, Licence: CC BY-NC.



In cultivation ex Lake Kohangapiripiri. Dec 2006. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dioecious or monoecious (Wellington Region only), widely creeping, perennial herb forming loose patches or compact turf depending on local conditions. **Rhizomes** at or near soil surface, green, dark red-green or purple, pliant, sparsely villous; branches usually single at flowering nodes; leaves in two rows, single at apex, 5–20 mm apart. Short shoots alternate on both sides of rhizomes with distant leaves. **Roots** white, slender up to 0.3 mm diameter. **Leaves** 1-pinnatifid, variable in size, submembranous, 30–50 × 4–8–(10) mm; lamina obovate to narrowly obovate, bright green, usually with the basal pinnae brown to red-brown pigmented, glabrous, midrib not raised on upper surface; pinnae 4–10 pairs, distant or distal ones overlapping, cut to rachis, elliptic or broadly-elliptic; teeth absent or with 1–2 on larger pinnae or up to 10 on all pinnae, obvious, confined to distal and outer margins, sometimes extending partly onto proximal margin, small, cut $\frac{1}{3}$ across pinna, triangular, or oblong, acute or acuminate. **Peduncles** on rhizomes, short but equal to leaves in length, 2–30 mm long, ebracteate, pilose-hairy. **Capitula** 2–3 mm diameter (pistillate capitula 4 mm in fruit); surface convex. **Pistillate capitula** involucre urceolate; involucre bracts 8–22 in 2 or more unequal rows, broadly elliptic, green, glabrescent, margins scarious, brown; inner involucre bracts extending in length to enclose the subglobose fruiting head; florets 10–30, 1.5 mm long, not exceeding involucre bracts, curved, yellow-green, corolla slightly longer than wide; with unequal teeth. **Staminate capitula** with hemispherical involucre; involucre bracts 5–8 in 1–2 subequal rows, not growing after anthesis; florets more numerous. **Bisexual heads** intermediate, with sex-types varying in proportion from capitula to capitula. **Cypselae** 1.3–1.6 × 0.6–0.8 mm, brown, slightly compressed, at first chartaceous maturing smooth.

SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *L. tenella* (A.Cunn.) D.G.Lloyd et C.Webb, with which it often grows (especially around the Wellington Region). As a rule *L. dispersa* is dioecious while *L. tenella* is monoecious, but around the Wellington area *L. dispersa* may be monoecious as well. Irrespective, it can be distinguished from *L. tenella* by its usually smaller and narrower leaves which are typically dark brown to red-brown pigmented near the base, pinnae which overlap and either lack teeth or have teeth confined to the larger pinnae (and these rarely extend around the pinnae), and by the longer involucre bracts which continue to grow in length after anthesis so enclosing the fruiting head.

FLOWERING

September–January

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

FRUITING

October–June

LIFE CYCLE

Papery cypselae are dispersed by wind and possibly attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from rooted pieces, a very attractive plant ideal for damp soils. Prefers a sunny aspect but will grow in dappled light. An excellent lawn cover on poorly drained ground.

THREATS

This species has a naturally sporadic distribution, and sometimes can be locally common. It is not nationally threatened but some populations are at risk from land reclamation, wetland drainage, and competition from weeds.

ETYMOLOGY

leptinella: From the Greek word leptos (meaning slender, thin or delicate), referring to the ovary

dispersa: Scattered

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 31 August 2006. Description from Lloyd (1972)—as *Cotula dispersa* subsp. *dispersa*.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Lloyd DG. 1972. A revision of the New Zealand, Subantarctic, and South American species of *Cotula*, section *Leptinella*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 10: 277–372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1972.10429156>.
- 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>.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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