

Myosotis colensoi

COMMON NAME

Castle Hill forget-me not

SYNONYMS

Exarrhena colensoi Kirk, *M. decora* Kirk

FAMILY

Boraginaceae

AUTHORITY

Myosotis colensoi (Kirk) Macbride

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

MYOCOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 46

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: RR

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (easterly from South Marlborough to Canterbury).

HABITAT

Limestone talus and thin soils over limestone rock. Most common in open areas of relatively fine limestone debris.



Flowers. Photographer: Cathy Jones, Licence: CC BY.



Habitat. Photographer: Cathy Jones, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial herb forming small cushions or loose mats on open limestone rock, regolith and associated rendzina soils. **Leaves** in dense, many-leaved rosettes. **Petiole** short and broad. **Rosette-leaves** 20–40 × 5–10 mm, grey-green to silvery-grey above, pale green beneath, lanceolate, apex subacute, base cuneate to attenuate; upper surface covered with tightly appressed, more or less overlapping, intermingled short and long straight hairs, lower surface, sparsely hairy to glabrescent or glabrous; hairs when present, appressed, more or less of equal length. **Lateral branches** decumbent, 40–80 mm long, leafy, internodes < leaves. **Stem leaves and bracts** oblong, 10 × 2–3–(5) mm, upper most sessile; hairs as for rosette leaves. **Inflorescence** cymose, with cymes usually simple, few- to many-flowered. **Internodes** 2–3 mm. **Pedicels** 2–3 mm. **Calyx** 5 mm when flowering elongating to 7 mm in fruit; lobes 2–3 mm, broad, subacute, surface covered with appressed, short and long straight hairs of almost equal proportions, intermingled. **Flowers** white. **Corolla** 8–12 mm diameter, tube 5 mm long, cylindric, corolla-lobes, 3 × 2.5–3 mm, recurved; filaments short, anthers 2 mm long, tips just protruding above scales. **Style** up to 10 mm long, stigma capitate. **Nutlets** 1.4–1.7 × 0.8–1.2 mm, ovate to ovate-elliptic, black, surface glossy.

SIMILAR TAXA

From the other *Myosotis* species present in New Zealand, *M. colensoi* can be recognised by its ecological preference for open limestone rock and associated soils, its densely leafy, cushions or mat-forming habit, grey-green to silvery-grey leaves, and rather large, short-stalked, white flowers. It has a superficial similarity to *M. cheesemanii* because both species have a low cushion to mat-forming habit, and rather leafy, appressed lateral branches. However in *M. colensoi* the lateral branches extend well beyond the rosette leaves, while those of *M. cheesemanii* are very short and so hidden within the rosette-leaves of this densely packed cushion-forming plant. The leaves of *M. cheesemanii* are 12 × 5 mm, elliptic, greener with the upper surface clad in closely appressed, overlapping hairs of equal length.

FLOWERING

October–January

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

December–February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

An ideal and attractive rock-garden or pot plant. Easily grown from rooted pieces and fresh seed. Best kept in a small pot or planted in a sunny, free draining soil enriched with lime. Will not tolerate humidity, excessive soil moisture or competition from weeds. This is one of the few New Zealand forget-me-nots that is commonly cultivated. In good conditions it often throws seedlings.

THREATS

Threatened throughout its range by weeds such as hawkweeds (*Pilosella* spp.), and grasses such as *Festuca rubra*, browntop (*Agrostis capillaris*) and cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*). Although generally not browsed by animals, plants are often dug out by rabbits, or killed through trampling. Recreational rock climbers pose a minor threat to some of the populations at Castle Hill. The greater part of the Castle Hill population is on private land, where it may be vulnerable to changing land use practices and potential quarrying for limestone.

ETYMOLOGY

myosotis: Mouse-eared

colensoi: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries and some main, more general garden centres.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (1 February 2008). Description based on Allan (1961)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsidea, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myosotis-colensoi/>