

Senecio minimus

COMMON NAME

fireweed

SYNONYMS

Senecio heterophylla Colenso, *Erechtites minima* (Poir.) DC. var. *minima*, *Erechtites minima* var. *angustata* Allan, *Erechtites minima* var. *heterophylla* (Colenso) Allan, *Erechtites pumila* DC.

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Senecio minimus Poir.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledonous composites

NVS CODE

SENMIN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 60

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. Three Kings, North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands. Present in Australia.

HABITAT

A weedy species of disturbed ground. Predominantly coastal to montane but occasionally extending into subalpine habitats. Most commonly associated with forest margins.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

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



Senecio minimus. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Senecio minimus. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Short-lived perennial to annual herb up to 2 m tall. Stems erect, green to dark purple, sparsely and minutely coarse-hairy below mid stem, becoming glabrous above. Mid stem leaves more or less evenly spaced and sized, 80-250 mm long, length:width ratio (l:w) 3-6, oblanceolate to narrow-elliptic, rarely broadly elliptic, not dissected often shallowly crenate; base auriculate, semi-amplexicaul; margin crowded-denticulate; upper surface dark green to greyish-green, glabrous or sparsely scabridulous; lower surface green or purple, sparsely cobbwebby. Upper most leaves narrowly elliptic, occasionally linear or narrow-lanceolate, l:w 3-10, often widest at auricles. Unit Inflorescences of many capitula; total number of capitula per stem often several hundred; overtopping absent or slight; mature lateral peduncles mostly 5-10 mm long. Capitula: calycular bracteoles 3-5, 1.0-2.0 mm long; peduncles mostly 5-10 mm long.; peduncle and margin of bracteoles more or less glabrous to lightly cobbwebby at anthesis; involucre 4.0-6.5 x 1.0-1.5 mm, involucre bracts 7-10, glabrous; stereomes (in dried material) more or less flat, green with black tips. Florets 12-25, c. 80% female; corolla lobes triangular, thickened apically; corolla of bisexual florets 4.5-6.0 mm long, 4-5-lobed; corolla lobes of female florets 3-4, 0.2-0.3 mm long. Cypsela 1.6-2.5 mm long, narrow obloid, sometimes slightly angular, dull brown or dark red-brown, somewhat lustrous with papillose hairs in lines. Pappus 5-6 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Senecio minimus is most similar to *S. kermadecensis* which, as the name suggests, is endemic to the Kermadec Island group. That species differs from *S. minimus* by its bright green leaves, elliptic rather than mostly narrow-elliptic to narrow-lanceolate mid stem leaves, fewer involucre bracts (5-8 cf. 7-10 in *S. minimus*), and by the cypsela (seeds) which have hairs within the grooves between the ribs, rather than on the ribs. Some Northland, Auckland and Coromandel plants of *S. minimus* have broader elliptic leaves and so approach *S. kermadecensis* but these plants match *S. minimus* with respect to involucre bract number and the distribution of hairs on the cypsela. This race of *S. minimus* deserves further critical study (see comments by de Lange & Rolfe 2010).

FLOWERING

Throughout the year but peaking in summer

FRUITING

Throughout the year but most common in late summer to early autumn

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed but can become invasive. Has little horticultural merit.

ETYMOLOGY

senecio: From the Latin *senex* 'old man' (probably referring to the bearded seeds)

minimus: Smallest (rather a misnomer)

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

In New Zealand two races are recognisable one, which is widespread is a robust plant with thicker, narrower leaves and usually distinctly hairy, green to grey-green stems. This race matches the type of *S. minimus* (see Drury 1974). The other is smaller, and has consistently dark purple stems and leaf undersides, and much broader glabrate leaves. This second race first appeared in Northland about 50 years ago and is actively spreading south. A collection of this race from the Poor Knights Islands was treated by Drury (1974) as *S. kermadecensis* which it approaches only in its leaf shape. Both races key out to *S. minimus* using Australian treatments.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 28 July 2007. Description by P.J. de Lange based on Webb et al. (1988) and observations obtained from fresh plants and herbarium specimens.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange, P.J.; Rolfe, J.R. 2010: New Zealand Indigenous Vascular Plant Checklist. Wellington, New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. 164pp.

Drury, D.G. 1974: Illustrated and annotated key to the erectitoid senecios in New Zealand (Senecioneae-Compositae) with a description of *Senecio diaschides*. N.Z. Journal of Botany 12(4): 513-540.

Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. 1988: Flora of New Zealand Vol. IV. DSIR, Christchurch.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/senecio-minimus/>