

Olearia polita

SMALL-LEAVED TREE DAISY

Olearia polita is one of eight rare *Olearia* species included in the Small-leaved Tree Daisy National Recovery Plan. A separate fact sheet is available for each species. The aim of the factsheets is to encourage public awareness of these unique New Zealand species and to find compatible ways of managing the places where they exist. A first step towards this is to help people recognise the plants and take an interest in their welfare.

Description

Although first collected in 1882, *Olearia polita* was only recognised as a distinct species in 1975. It was formally described and named in 1992 having previously been known as *Olearia* "Glenhope" after the site north of Murchison where it was first recognised.

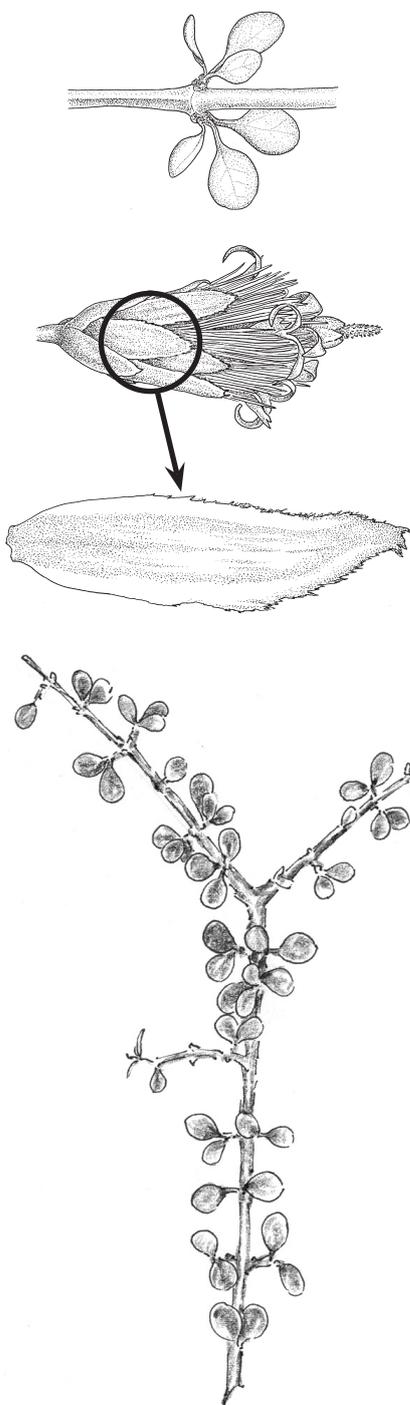
It is an evergreen shrub or small tree to 6 m tall, stoutly branched, with furrowed bark on the trunk and older branches.

Young branches have light grey, smooth bark. Leaves are in opposite pairs, or clusters of opposite pairs, and are small, oval in shape, dark green, leathery, and shiny on the upper surface, with a silvery white under surface. Juvenile leaves are toothed. The small clusters of flowers that appear in spring are highly scented.

Habitat

Olearia polita occurs on valley floors and toe slopes of a particular geological

formation. It is found in openings of poorly-drained, silver beech (*Nothofagus menziesii*) forest, and in shrubby frost flat communities which undergo periodic disturbance from flooding and slumping.



Sketches not to scale





Photos by John Barkla and Roger Gaskell. Sketches by Lloyd Esler and Rebecca Wagstaff.

Similar Plants

There are a number of similar looking plants including *Coprosma rigida*, *Corokia cotoneaster*, *Coprosma taylorae*, *Coprosma crassifolia*, *Myrsine divaricata* and *Olearia virgata*.

Distribution

Olearia polita is confined to mudstone and siltstone (papa) sediments in the Hope and Wangapeka Valleys, in South-West Nelson. Because of abundant native forest remaining in this general area, more populations could be discovered.

Population Size

Around 1,300 plants are known in the wild, occurring at six main locations with populations ranging from 40 to 700 plants. Continuous regeneration is evident at most sites, and therefore recruitment is not considered limiting.

National Threat Status and Threats

Nationally Endangered. Threats include habitat loss through wetland drainage and conversion to pasture; weed invasion especially exotic swarding grasses, resulting in lack of recruitment and light competition from gorse, blackberry and old man's beard.



How Can I help?

Learn to recognise the plant.

Tell staff at the Department of Conservation if you discover populations of the plant or suspect you have.

Explore ways to protect populations of the plant through covenanting, fencing weed control and supplementary planting.

Use locally sourced plants in gardens, shelterbelts and revegetation projects.

Further Information

For more information visit the New Zealand Plant Conservation web site: www.nzpcn.org.nz

DOC Contacts

Nelson/Marlborough Conservancy

Department of Conservation

Private Bag 5

Nelson 7042

Phone (03) 546 9335



References

Williams P.A., Courtney S.P. 1995. Site characteristics and population structures of the endangered shrub *Olearia polita* (Wilson et Garnock-Jones), Nelson, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany*, 1995, Vol. 33: 237-241

Wilson H.D., Garnock-Jones P.J., 1992. Short communication Two new species names in *Olearia* (Asteraceae) from New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany*, 1992, Vol. 30: 365-368