



Senecio esperensis

Common Name(s):

L Esperance Rock groundsel

Current Threat Status (2012):

Threatened - Nationally Critical

Distribution:

Endemic. Kermadec Island group, known only from the summit slopes and crater of L Esperance Rock.

Habitat:

The summit of L Esperance Rock (also known as French Rock), where it only grows in volcanic tuff and guano deposits.

Features*:

Annual glabrous, succulent herb up to 1.2 m tall. Stem simple, occasionally branched, erect. Leaves initially petiolate toward stem base becoming sessile then auriculate, ultimately stem clasping toward stem apex; lamina up to 230 × 40mm, glossy dark green above, paler and dull beneath, succulent, oblong-spathulate, irregularly serrate to lobulate with teeth to 5mm long but never deeply pinnatifid. Inflorescence terminal with 1 or more branches. Capitula 10–12, usually widely spaced in a loose head. Involucral bracts 8–9(-13), pale green to dark green, 5–7mm long, margins scarious, apex acute. Ray florets 8–10, ligules 1.6–3.25mm long, yellow, somewhat revolute. Disc florets 4mm long. Cypsela 2.5mm long, dark brown, cylindrical, shallowly ribbed, with sparse hairs in grooves

Flowering:

September - October
(depending on local conditions)

Fruiting:

September to December
(depending on local conditions)

Threats:

The only known habitat is a nature reserve remote from main shipping routes so the rock is rarely visited. For emergency purposes the summit of the island was used as a fuel dump for rescue helicopters. Ironically there is where the *Senecio* mainly grows. In May 2011 a visit to L'Esperance by Department of Conservation staff found the *Senecio* to be locally common, they also found no sign of the helicopter platform or fuel dump - these appeared to have been washed away by Cyclone Bune which struck the Kermadec Islands in March 2011 (de Lange 2015).

Senecio esperensis qualifies as Nationally Critical because of its small area of occupancy (de Lange 2015 (as *S. lautus* subsp. *esperensis*) and de Lange et al. 2015).

*Attribution:

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange 11 November 2008. Description from de Lange et al. (2015)

References and further reading:

de Lange PJ 2015. The flora and vegetation of L'Esperance Rock, southern Kermadec Islands group. *Auckland Museum Bulletin* 20: 231–242.

de Lange in: de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Norton, D.A.; Rolfe, J.R.; Sawyer, J.W.D. 2010: Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch.

de Lange, P.J.; Liew, C.S.; Rolfe, J.R.; Pelsner, P.B. 2015: *Senecio esperensis* (Asteraceae: Senecioneae)—a new combination for the L'Esperance Rock groundsel, Kermadec Islands. *New Zealand Journal of Botany*, DOI: 10.1080/0028825X.2015.1039552

Sykes, W. R. 1971: *Senecio lautus* in the Kermadec Islands. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 9: 533–538.

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=680



Caption: Seedling in scoria, L'Esperance Rock, Kermadec Islands. May 2011.

Photographer: Peter de Lange



Caption: Seedling beside land crab burrow, L'Esperance Rock, Kermadec Islands. May 2011.

Photographer: Peter de Lange