

Coprosma tenuifolia

SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1886)

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma tenuifolia Cheeseman

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

COPTF

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Large shrub bearing pairs of mottled wavy leaves that taper to a narrow point. Twigs green flecked with red. Leaves 7–11 cm with a thin dark-tipped and usually hair fringed sheath around stem at base of leaves. Fruit orange or red, in short clusters.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (from Mt Pirongia and East Cape south to the Tararua Ranges).

HABITAT

Lowland to montane forest especially on alluvium and other base-rich soils. In the northern part of its range it is exclusively montane.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

UPL: Obligate Upland

Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands (non-wetlands).



Pureora, May. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



At Pureora, May. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rather slender shrub or tree up to c. 5 m tall, with stout glabrous ascending branches and branchlets. **Leaves** on slender pubescent petioles 10–25 mm long. **Stipules** broad-oblong, connate, obtuse, more or less ciliolate; denticle prominent, stout, acute to acuminate. **Lamina** membranous to thinly coriaceous, pubescent above on midrib, 70–110 × 30–45 mm, dull dark green, red-green or variously blotched, tinged or blemished with red, maroon or purple, ovate to oblong, acute, usually apiculate, rather abruptly narrowed into petiole; margins slightly wavy, sometimes crenulate. **Reticulated veins** fine, evident. **Male flowers** in clusters of 2–3 on short branchlets; calyx 0; corolla subcampanulate, lobes short, acute. **Female flowers** in clusters of opposite pairs, on short leafy branchlets; calyx-teeth short, ciliolate; corolla tubular, lobes short, acute. **Drupe** orange, ovoid, 7–8 mm long.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to *Coprosma* species of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

The allopatric sister species of the Raoul Island endemic *Coprosma acutifolia* from which it differs by its larger (70–110 × 30–45 mm), ovate to oblong, acute, usually apiculate leaves which are dull dark green, red-green or variously blotched, tinged or blemished with red, maroon or purple. The leaves of *Coprosma acutifolia* are 60–90 × 20–35 mm, yellow-green, often mottled with dark green, narrow-ovate, ovate, ovate-elliptic to lanceolate, acuminate. The peduncles of *Coprosma tenuifolia* are unbranched while those of *C. acutifolia* are pedicellate (branched). The fruits of *Coprosma acutifolia* are oblong and orange red rather than ovoid and orange. Both species hybridise readily when grown together in cultivation.

FLOWERING

November–January

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

FRUITING

March–May

LIFE CYCLE

Fleshy drupes are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

An attractive shrub to small tree on account of its colourful foliage. It does well in a shaded situation planted in a permanently damp, free draining, fertile soil. Despite its attractive foliage *Coprosma tenuifolia* is rarely seen in cultivation.

ETYMOLOGY

coprosma: From the Greek kopros 'dung' and osme 'smell', referring to the foul smell of the species, literally 'dung smell'

tenuifolia: Thin, slender leaves

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (10 January 2007): Description adapted from Allan (1961)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

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

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/coprosma-tenuifolia/>