

Crassula multicaulis

SYNONYMS

Tillaea multicaulis Petrie

FAMILY

Crassulaceae

AUTHORITY

Crassula multicaulis (Petrie) A.P.Druce et Given

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

CRAMUL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 56

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: EF, PD, RR, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: EF, RR, Sp

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: EF, DP

2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. In the North Island known only from one old record from Cape Palliser. In the South Island scarce in North West Nelson, southern Marlborough and Canterbury, North and Central Otago.

HABITAT

Coastal, lowland to alpine (0–1800 m a.s.l.) in open, seasonally damp ground, such as clay or salt plans or around tarn margins. It has also been collected from braided river beds.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Annual to short-lived perennial forming dark red, pink or green, moss-like mats; stems initially decumbent, soon ascending, rooting at nodes, much-branched from base, branches reaching up to 60 mm tall. Leaves fused at base, 1–3 x 0.6–0.7 mm, 0.3–0.4 mm thick, triangular-lanceolate, flattened above, strongly convex and keeled below; apex very acute, usually conspicuously apiculate. Flowers solitary in upper leaf axils, fragrant, stellate, 4-merous, 3.5–5 mm diam.; pedicels 2(–5) mm long, elongating at fruiting. Calyx lobes 0.5–0.8 x 0.5–0.6 mm, triangular, acute, usually apiculate. Petals 1.6–1.8 x 1.3 mm, broadly elliptic-ovate, white or pink, or pink-flushed, apex rounded, much > calyx. Scales 0.7 mm long, oblanceolate. Follicles smooth. Seed 0.5 mm long.



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 28/02/2009, Licence: CC BY.



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 28/02/2009, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA

Crassula multicaulis is very distinctive, the combination of an almost annual habit, preference for ephemeral wetlands in seasonally dry habits, usually dark red colouration, keeled, apiculate leaves, and large, often pedicellate flowers with elliptic-ovate rounded petals mark it out from all other indigenous *Crassula*.

FLOWERING

November – April

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

FRUITING

November – May

LIFE CYCLE

Minute follicles are dispersed by wind and water and possibly also by attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from rooted pieces, fresh seed and stem cuttings. An attractive plant with pleasantly scented flowers. In cultivation it normally forms a large, but short-lived mound. This species needs regular rejuvenation from fresh cuttings or rooted pieces to maintain the plant.

THREATS

Field work by M. Thorsen (pers. comm.) suggests that this species is seriously threatened. Its preferred habitats are now largely drained or taken over by exotic weeds, and his fieldwork could only locate 2 small populations at a moderately high elevation where these agents of decline were less frequent (but still present). It has not been seen in the North Island since the 1950s, and is scarce north of Otago, with one site known in the 1000 Acre Plateau area of NW Nelson.

ETYMOLOGY

crassula: From the Latin *crassus* 'thick', meaning 'rather thick'

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 November 2005. Description adapted from Allan (1961), Webb et al. (1988) and de Lange et al. (2010).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Wellington, Government Printer.
- de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Norton, D.A.; Rolfe, J.R.; Sawyer, J.W.D. 2010: Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Christchurch, Canterbury University Press. 471pp
- Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285-309
- Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. 1988: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. IV. Naturalised Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms, Dicotyledons. Christchurch, New Zealand, Botany Division, D.S.I.R..

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/crassula-multicaulis/>