Ascarina lucida var. lucida

COMMON NAMES
Hutu

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Small bushy tree of wetter forests. Leaves glossy, yellow green, with coarse black-tipped teeth on margins. Flowers pinkish, in sprays. Fruit small, white.



Westhaven. Photographer: Simon Walls, Date taken: 01/03/2008, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FLOWER COLOURS
Green, Red/Pink



Charleston, West Coast. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 14/02/2014, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Glabrous monoecious shrub or small tree up to 8 m; trunk up to 300 mm diameter. Branchlets slender, becoming striate, dark purple. Interpetiolar stipules conspicuous, hair-like, 3, dark reddish-purple to maroon. Petioles 8-10 mm long; lamina coriaceous, 20-80 × 15-38 mm, elliptic to oval to obovate, obtuse to acute to subacuminate, cuneately narrowed to base; margins coarsely serrate; surface glossy yellow-green (rarely dark green) above, paler below, serrations dark purple-black or maroon. Inflorescences spicate; spikes oppositely arranged, solitary or openly branched up to 5 times, slender; branches 30-40 mm long. Flowers alternate, sessile, subtended by green or red-tinged, 0.8-1.2 mm long, less crenulate to serrate, deltoid to broadly ovate, acute bract and a smaller lateral pair. Male flower with one cylindric anther 2.5-3.0 mm long; Female flower smaller, solitary or 2-3 together located between anther and stem stigma broad, sessile, ovary sessile. Fruit 2.5-3.0 mm long, broadly ovoid, fleshy white drupe.

SIMILAR TAXA
Ascarina lucida var. *lanceolata*, which is endemic to Raoul Island in the Kermadec Islands group, is clearly related. *A. lucida* var. *lucida* differs from *A. lucida* var. *lanceolata* by the dark purple stems; by the 3 simple, conspicuous, reddish-purple filamentous stipules which lack fused bases; smaller, yellow-green leaves with purple-black or dark maroon pigmented serrations; more openly branched inflorescences with less congested flowers, and white drupes. *Ascarina lucida* var. *lucida* seems to be monoecious while *A. lucida* var. *lanceolata* appears to be gynodioecious, but this aspect needs further study.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. North and South Islands. North Island: From Kaitaia south to Wellington, mostly in the west, and only common in the Coromandel Ranges. South Island: North-West Nelson to Southland, abundant in North-West Nelson and Westland.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane. A forest species which is most common in the wetter lowland and coastal forest of North-West Nelson and Westland. Elsewhere it is mostly uncommon, sporadic and often absent over large parts of its range.

THREATS
Not Threatened but very uncommon in the North Island

GENUS
Ascarina

FAMILY
Chloranthaceae

AUTHORITY
Ascarina lucida Hook.f. var. lucida

SYNONYMS
Ascarina lucida Hook.f.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
August - December

FRUITING
January - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Very easy from fresh seed and cuttings. Rather cold sensitive and prefers moist soils, doing best in a sunny, sheltered situation.

CULTIVATION
Occasionally sold by plant nurseries throughout New Zealand.

ETYMOLOGY
lucida: Shining

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 26

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, RR Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I, Government Printer, Wellington.
de Lange, P.J. 1998. Two interesting plant records from Mt. Pirongia western Waikato. Auckland Botanical Society Journal, 53: 66-69
Martin, T.J. 2002. *Ascarina lucida* in the Auckland region. Auckland Botanical Society Journal, 57: 57-59

ATTRIBUTION

Description based on Allan (1961).

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ascarina-lucida-var-lucida/

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