

Colobanthus squarrosus subsp. squarrosus

COMMON NAMES

colobanthus

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A compact multi-branched cushion up to 700 mm diameter and 50-75 mm high (large cushions may be formed from the coalescence of several individuals). Branches leafy for much of length with c.5-8 pairs of green leaves and numerous persistent, pale brown dead leaves below; internodes 0.1-10.5 mm long. Leaves rigid, spreading to ascending and $\pm$ imbricate; sheath 0.6-2.5 mm long; blade subulate, 1.4-9.0 mm long (including the translucent tip), 0.6-1.4 mm wide, with colourless borders c.0.1 mm wide, becoming $\pm$ channelled when dry, gradually narrowed into a shortly acicular tip 0.3-0.9 mm long. Inflorescence a solitary flower on a bracteolate peduncle, lateral near branch apex. Flowers predominantly 5-merous, 3.5-5.5 mm diameter. Sepals 4-5, persistent, ovate, ovate-triangular or broadly ovate-triangular, 2.5-3.5 x 1.2-2.6 mm, margins $\pm$ membranous, keel not thickened, inconspicuous, predominantly white at anthesis (with a pale green median strip below) but becoming pale green at fruiting, the apex acute, occasionally cucullate, often with a small apiculus 0.1-0.4 mm long. Petals 0. Stamens 4-5, 3.0-7.8 mm long; anthers pale yellow. Ovary ovoid, white to yellowish at flowering becoming pale green at fruiting, ovules 9-44; styles 4 or 5, 1.5-3.5 mm long. Peduncles $\pm$ hidden amongst leaves or shortly exerted at fruiting, 1.1-12.7 mm long, with 1-3 pairs of foliose bracteoles; bracteoles 1.4-3.7 mm long with a short apiculate tip 0.1-0.4 mm long. Capsule splitting to c.½, 4- or 5-valved, valves from 1 mm shorter to 1.5 mm longer than sepals. Seeds brown, shiny, colliculate dorsally to $\pm$ smooth laterally, $\pm$ obliquely reniform, 0.5-0.85 x 0.4-0.7 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

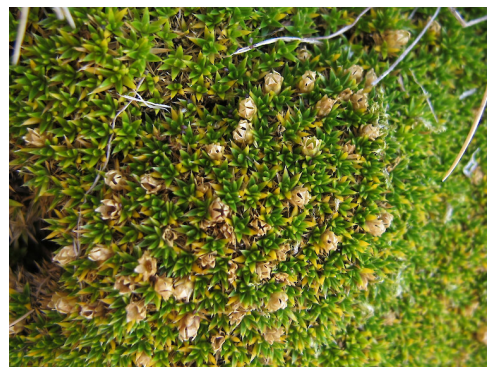
The subspecies forms larger cushions than any other New Zealand species of *Colobanthus*, with the possible exception of *C. muscoides*. The predominantly white sepals of the flowers, together with the usually strongly exerted stamens, distinguish this subspecies from subspecies *drucei* and all the other New Zealand species of *Colobanthus*.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (north-west Nelson, Kahurangi National Park).



Mt Arthur, Kahurangi National Park.
Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken:
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Mt Arthur, Kahurangi National Park.
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HABITAT

Alpine. On limestone-marble rock outcrops, cliffs, and talus slopes; less commonly found on skeletal, stony soils in sparse grassland.

THREATS

A Naturally Uncommon, range-restricted, endemic of limestone/marble mountain ranges within Kahurangi National Park. There are no known threats.

GENUS

Colobanthus

FAMILY

Caryophyllaceae

AUTHORITY

Colobanthus squarrosus Cheeseman subsp. squarrosus

SYNONYMS

None (described in 1999)

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November – January

FRUITING

January – March

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Winged seeds are dispersed by water and possibly also wind and ballistic projection (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Unknown in cultivation.

ETYMOLOGY

colobanthus: Mutilated flower with no petals

NVS CODE

COLSSS

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Sneddon B.V. 1999: The taxonomy and breeding system of *Colobanthus squarrosus* (Caryophyllaceae). *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 37: 195-204.

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.

ATTRIBUTION

Description modified from Sneddon (1999).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/colobanthus-squarrosus-subsp-squarrosus/>

PDF DATE

07 June 2026