

Coprosma atropurpurea

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Very low growing mat of erect very small slightly hairy leaves inhabiting upland open areas which is inconspicuous unless fruiting. Leaves small, narrow, with a few hairs on both top and bottom. Fruit red, shiny.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Subshrub forming dense low mats or cushions up to more or less 2 m across, usually smaller. Branches creeping and rooting, bark dark brown; branchlets slender, pubescent. Leaves densely crowded, sessile or subsessile, usually fascicled on short branchlets. Stipules rather broadly triangular, subacute, sheathing, pubescent, ciliolate. Lamina coriaceous, dark green above, more or less pubescent apex exhibits weft of hairs, narrowly elliptic to obovate to oblong, cuneately narrowed to base, acute, (3-) 5 (-10) x 1-3 mm; margins entire. Midrib alone evident or obscure. Flowers greenish; male flower solitary, terminal, more or less 20 mm long, filaments lengthening at anthesis; calyx obsolete or vestigial; corolla funnelform, lobes acute or subacute; female flower solitary, terminal; calyx-teeth narrow-triangular; corolla tubular, short. Drupes dark magenta, globose, 6-8 mm diameter.

SIMILAR TAXA

Coprosma petriei has pale blue fruit when ripe; generally lighter coloured foliage; has no weft of hairs on leaf apex.

DISTRIBUTION

South Island. Widespread but often more common in the east and north as far south as Fiordland.

HABITAT

Lowland to Low Alpine: 200-1500 m. Often local and sometimes abundant in cushion bogs, riverbeds, and open, moist snow-tussock grassland and shrubland, rarely with *C. petriei*.

GENUS

Coprosma

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma atropurpurea (Cockayne et Allan) L.B.Moore

SYNONYMS

Coprosma petriei var. *atropurpurea* Cockayne & Allan.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes



Waimakariri flats, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



At Waimakariri flats, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November-March

FRUITING

January-June (-September)

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

ETYMOLOGY

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

atropurpurea: Latin, atrox meaning 'very' or 'fiercely' and purpurea meaning 'purple', referring to the fruit colour.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to Coprosma species of New Zealand](#)

NVS CODE

COPATR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.220

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025](#)" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H. H. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. 1. Wellington: Government Printer. pg. 566.

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.

Mark, A. F. 2012. Above the Treeline: A Nature Guide to Alpine New Zealand. Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson. pg. 168.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted by M. Ward from Allan (1961) and Mark (2012).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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