

Coprosma atropurpurea

SYNONYMS

Coprosma petriei var. *atropurpurea* Cockayne & Allan.

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

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

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

COPATR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.220

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF 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.

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*.

FEATURES

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.



Waimakariri flats, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



At Waimakariri flats, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

SIMILAR TAXA

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

FLOWERING

November-March

FRUITING

January-June (-September)

LIFE CYCLE

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.

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

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.

MORE INFORMATION

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