

Coprosma cheesemanii

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Low growing, very small leaved shrub with branches bearing perpendicular short leafy branches giving a flattened appearance inhabiting upland areas. Twigs fuzzy. Leaves glossy, narrow, 8-11mm long, tip pointed, in clusters of pairs, with a line of small hairs between the leaf bases. Fruit orange or reddish.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Prostrate to sprawling shrub up to 0.5 (-1) m tall. **Branches** greyish, more or less divaricate, branchlets slender; pubescent. **Leaves** very shortly petioled. **Stipules** broadly triangular, obtuse, pubescent to villous, ciliate especially at apex. **Lamina** coriaceous, glossy, olive-green, linear to narrow-oblong, acute, more or less 8-11 × 1-2 mm, margins usually reddish brown. Midrib alone evident. **Flowers** solitary, terminal on short branchlets. Male flower without calyx; corolla broadly campanulate; lobes 4-6, acute to subacute, more or less equal to tube. Female Flower with calyx-teeth evident, acute, corolla-tube short, lobes linear more or less reflexed. **Drupe** orange-red, globose, 6-7 mm diameter. **Seeds** 1-2 per fruit, elliptic to broadly elliptic, (3.0-)3.2-4.2(-4.5) × (2.0-)2.2-2.7(-3.0) mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Coprosma cuneata has indented tips to the leaves and dark bark on the branchlets.

C. microcarpa has small white fruit, abundant leaves that are rather thin and often arranged in flat leafy planes, and dark brown bark.

C. acerosa and its close relatives have longer, narrower leaves, and pale blue or white fruit often flecked with darker blue.

C. fowerakeri is more densely leafy, with closely clustered, more leathery leaves and orange fruit.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Te Ika-a-Māui | **North Island**, Te Waipounamu | **South Island** and Rakiura | **Stewart Island**. Locally from Mount Hikurangi southwards.

HABITAT

Montane to subalpine (400-1500 m.a.s.l.), tussock-grassland, shrubland, bog forest, often permanently damp areas.

GENUS

Coprosma

FAMILY

Rubiaceae



Steele Creek, Greenstone. Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken: 01/03/2013, Licence: CC BY.



Tongariro, February. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Coprosma cheesemanii W.R.B.Oliv.

SYNONYMS

Coprosma depressa (Hook. f.) Cheeseman

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Wilson & Galloway (1993) briefly discuss other related spp.: *Coprosma* aff. *cheesemanii* (C. sp. (r) of Eagle 1982) is a prostrate shrub with narrow oblong leaves and orange-red fruit. It is restricted to pans of Nelson and Marlborough where it grows in crevices of marble and on the Mineral Belt ultramafic rocks. *Coprosma* aff. *cheesemanii* (C. sp. (o) of Eagle 1982) is a prostrate or sprawling shrub up to 70 cm tall with distinctly wider leaves than in *C. cheesemanii* proper, with which it grows in the central North Island. It is found in subalpine and alpine shrubland in the central North Island southwards to the southern Ruahine Range. A. P. Druce recognises both of these forms as distinct unnamed species.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

December

FRUITING

January-March

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

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

cheesemanii: Named after Thomas Frederick Cheeseman (1846 - 15 October 1923) who was a New Zealand botanist and naturalist who, in 1906, produced *The Manual of the New Zealand Flora*.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

COPCHE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 88

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 HH. 1961. *Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsidea, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones*. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. pgs. 568, 586-587.
- Eagle A. 1982. *Eagle's trees and shrubs of New Zealand. Vol. 2*. Auckland, Collins.
- Mark AF. 2012. *Above the Treeline: A Nature Guide to Alpine New Zealand*. Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson. pg. 169.
- Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11*: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.
- Wilson HD & Galloway T. 1993. *Small-leaved shrubs of New Zealand*. Manuka Press. pg. 89-91.

ATTRIBUTION

Description for NZPCN adapted by M. Ward from Allan (1961), Mark (2012), Wilson & Galloway (1993).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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