

# Coprosma colensoi

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Bushy shrub with small pairs of leaves inhabiting montane forests. Plants with one of two forms of leaves – either very narrow or oval. Leaves 9-15mm long, abruptly tapering to stem if oval shaped, with 1-2 pits on underside. Fruit crimson.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Slender to rather stout spreading leafy shrub up to 2 (-3) m tall. Branches with dark brown to red-brown bark; branchlets pubescent to glabrous. Leaves on pubescent petioles 2-3 mm long. Stipules triangular, subacute to obtuse, with scattered patches of short hairs, ciliolate usually with prominent dark denticle). Lamina fresh yellowish-green to dark green, glabrous, coriaceous, oblong to broad-oblong to obovate to elliptic (several forms usually on one plant), (7- ) 9-15 (-20) x (3-) 5-8 mm, obtuse to truncate or retuse, narrowed abruptly to petiole. Midrib and many secondary veins evident. Flowers solitary on decurved peduncles. Male flower without calyx; corolla subcampanulate, lobes ovate, acute, more or less equal to tube. Female flower with small, obtuse teeth; corolla tubular, lobes acute, longer than tube. Drupe crimson, broad-oblong, 6-7 mm. long.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Coprosma foetidissima* may easily be confused when stunted forms are present, though generally much larger-leaved. Unlike *C. colensoi*, *C. foetidissima* gives off a strong smell of rotten eggs when crushed; the leaves are thinner as well as usually being more than 20 mm long; the flowers face upwards, and the fruit is bright orange without red flecks. The fruit of *C. colensoi* tastes pleasant, but that of *C. foetidissima* tastes dreadful!

*Coprosma rigida* has generally smaller leaves than *C. colensoi*, with a distinctive flat or indented hair-fringed leaf tip; the branching is much more rigid and wide-angled, and the fruit is whitish or pale orange, and usually distinctly constricted between the two pyrenes.

## DISTRIBUTION

North, South and Stewart Islands. Mount Moehau southwards.

## HABITAT

Lowland to lower subalpine forest, shrubland.

## GENUS

Coprosma

## FAMILY

Rubiaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Coprosma colensoi* Hook.f.



Herepai Ridge, Taranua Range. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 05/06/2010, Licence: CC BY.



Herepai Ridge, Taranua Range. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 05/06/2010, Licence: CC BY.

## SYNONYMS

*Coprosma banksii* Hook.f., *Coprosma pseudocolensoi* (Cockayne) in Allan 1934.

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Historically the narrow-leaved forms were misleadingly described as a separate species called *Coprosma banksii*. In Allan (1961) Oliver notes that “*C. Colensoi* hybridizes freely with *C. foetidissima* wherever it meets this species. So diverse are the hybrid swarms that it is difficult to determine the limits of the species or the probable parentage of the hybrids.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October-November

## FRUITING

February-June

## 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’

**colensoi:** Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## NVS CODE

COPCOL

## 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, H. H. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. 1. Wellington: Government Printer. pg. 574.

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.

Wilson, H. D., & Galloway, T. 1993. Small-leaved shrubs of New Zealand. Manuka Press. pg. 100-101.

## **ATTRIBUTION**

Description adapted by M. Ward from Allan (1961) and Wilson & Galloway (1993).

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## **MORE INFORMATION**

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

## **PDF DATE**

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