

Coprosma colensoi

SYNONYMS

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

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma colensoi Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

COPCOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 88

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF 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.

DISTRIBUTION

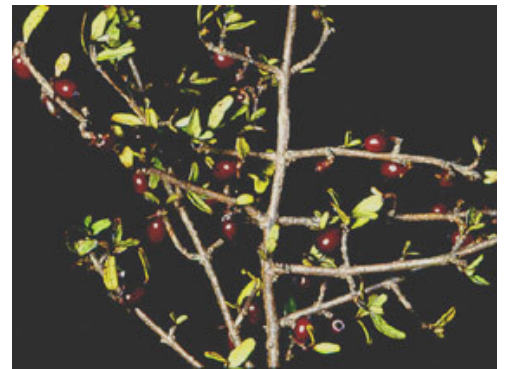
North, South and Stewart Islands. Mount Moehau southwards.

HABITAT

Lowland to lower subalpine forest, shrubland.



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



At Te moehau, February. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

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.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to *Coprosma* species of New Zealand

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.

FLOWERING

October-November

FRUITING

February-June

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'

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.

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.

ATTRIBUTION

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

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.

MORE INFORMATION

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