

Coprosma crassifolia

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Shrub with wide-angled reddish branches and pairs of small thick round or oval glossy leaves that are white underneath. Twigs covered in small hairs towards tip. Leaves 6-10mm long, with very small hairs around the margin. Fruit yellowish or white.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Much-branched shrub, up to 1-2 (-4) m tall. Branches rigid, divaricate, bark dark reddish brown; branchlets rather slender, more or less interlacing, often sculptured, pubescent when young. Leaves few together in fascicles on short branchlets, or paired; petioles narrowly winged, 1-2 mm long, pubescent. Stipules triangular, acute, pubescent, ciliolate (sometimes with denticle at tip). Lamina thick, coriaceous, dark green above, whitish to subglaucous below, suborbicular to oval to broad-oblong, rounded to subtruncate, abruptly narrowed to base, 6-10 (-15) x (3-) 5 (-10) mm; margins ciliolate when young, recurved. Venation more or less obscure on both surfaces, or midrib evident below. Flowers unisexual. Male flower solitary or 2-4 together on short branchlets; calyx not present; corolla funnelform, lobes ovate, acute, equal to or greater than tube. Female flower solitary, terminal on short branchlets; calyx-teeth minute; corolla-tube short, lobes long, narrow, acute. Drupe pale yellow or white, globose, 5-6 mm diameter.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from all other *Coprosma* species by the pale to white undersides of the thick, dark green leaves. *Coprosma obconica* has pale undersides to leaves, but has distinctive fruit, broader than long and tapering to the point of attachment like an inverted cone; yellowish white with purple grey streaks. The leaves also usually have a final little denticle on the rounded tips, lacking in *C. crassifolia*.

DISTRIBUTION

North and South Islands. Often east of main ranges in both islands except in Northland where found anywhere with suitable habitat.

HABITAT

Coastal rocky and sandy lowland to lower montane shrubland and forest, up to 600 m.

GENUS

Coprosma



Staminate flowers. Mangatoetoe Stream, Palliser Bay. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 02/10/2010, Licence: CC BY.



Otakaha Stream, Palliser Bay. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 15/03/2008, Licence: CC BY.

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma crassifolia Colenso

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Plants found in under canopy situation have larger, thinner leaves and a more open branching habit.

In Allan (1961), Oliver accepts hybridism between *C. crassifolia* x *C. tenuicaulis* (from specimens now in Auckland collected by Cranwell and Moore on Maungapohatu; *C. crassifolia* x *C. rigida*; *C. crassifolia* x *C. robusta* (*C. buchananii* Kirk).

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September-October

FRUITING

November-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'

crassifolia: From the Latin crassus 'thick' and folius 'leaf'

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

COPCRA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 132

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, PF, TL Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland](#)" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: TL 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, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.
- 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, Christchurch, NZ. 305 p.

ATTRIBUTION

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

Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 June 2026