

Coprosma crenulata

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 sprawling yellowish shrub with small thick narrow pairs of leaves that have are finely notched towards the tip (lens needed) inhabiting upland areas of the South and Stewart Islands. Leaves curved, wider at tip which is dented inwards, smells faintly badly when crushed. Fruit bright red.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Procumbent shrub up to 0.3 m high, with long trailing branches, bark light grey. Branchlets straw coloured, numerous, more or less tetragonous, pubescent. Leaves on short stout petioles. Stipules short, truncate, with 3 conspicuous denticles, ciliolate. Lamina thick, coriaceous, glabrous, on short stout petioles, obovate to obovate-oblong, retuse, cuneately narrowed to base, more or less 9-10 (-20) x 3-5 mm; margins thickened, minutely crenulate towards apex, slightly foetid smell when bruised. Midrib prominent below, impressed above. Flowers solitary, terminal. Male flower without calyx; corolla funnelform, approximately 6 mm long, tube approximately 4 mm long, lobes usually 5, ovate-triangular, acute; stamens usually 5. Female flower with minute calyx-teeth; corolla funnelform to tubular, cut halfway into 5 acute lobes. Drupe yellowish red, bright red, ovoid, approximately 6 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Coprosma aff. colensoi (*Coprosma* 'decipiens' in Landcare *Coprosma* Key) has leaves which are curved back at the tips but not indented, stipules each with a single denticle, and pendant flowers; it also lacks the minutely saw-edged margins towards the tip of each leaf characteristic of *C. crenulata*.

C. depressa has thinner, rounder leaves, and relatively large, whitish, papery stipules.

C. cheesemanii has much narrower, pointed, thinner leaves.

C. cuneata the leaves of are similar in shape to *C. crenulata*, but narrower, and are not as leathery; in addition, the bark is dark brown, and the stipules are triangular and hair-fringed, not 3-toothed and short as in *C. crenulata*.

DISTRIBUTION

South and Stewart Islands. From western Nelson southwards.

HABITAT

Montane to subalpine 700-1400m, Often common yet rather inconspicuous in open subalpine scrub, mixed snow tussock-scrub and herbfield on permanently damp, often-peaty sites.

GENUS

Coprosma



At Arthurs Pass, November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Arthurs Pass, November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma crenulata W.R.B.Oliv.

SYNONYMS

Coprosma retusa (Hook. f.) Petrie

TAXONOMIC NOTES

In Allan (1961) Oliver, places this sp. close to *C. serrulata* on account of “the peculiar crenulate edges to the leaves, the dentate stipules, and the flowers”.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January-February

FRUITING

February-June (-September)

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’

crenulata: From the Latin crenus ‘notch’, meaning with notches which give a leaf margin the appearance of having small rounded teeth

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

COPCRE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

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. 573-574.

Mark, A. F. 2012. Above the Treeline: A Nature Guide to Alpine New Zealand. Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson. pg. 170.

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. 118-119.

ATTRIBUTION

Description 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-crenulata/>

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