

Coprosma cuneata

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 many clusters of small dark green narrow leaves that are dented at the tip on very short side branches. Leaves curved, 9-16 mm long by 2mm wide, widest at tip, with a tuft of small hairs between the base of the pairs of leaves. Fruit red, persisting.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Slender shrub up to 1 m tall, flattened or sprawling in exposed sites.

Branches flexible, with dark to very dark brown bark; branchlets usually finely pubescent when young. **Leaves** usually in rather distant pairs or fascicles, petioles very slender, 1–2–(3) mm long. **Stipules** oblong-triangular, subacute to obtuse, pubescent, ciliate, with apical tuft of long hairs. **Lamina** subcoriaceous, glabrous, linear to very narrow-cuneate, more or less curved, truncate to obtuse, more or less retuse, sometimes mucronulate, (6)–10–16 × (0.5)–2–(3) mm. **Midrib** evident below, usually impressed above. **Flowers** unisexual. **Male flower** solitary or 2–4 together, terminal on short branchlets, calyx not present; corolla funnelform, tube more or less equal to narrow acute lobes. **Female flower** solitary, terminal; calyx-teeth very short; corolla narrow-funnelform, lobes narrow, acute, more or less equal to tube. **Drupe** clear red, globose, 3–5 mm diameter. **Seeds** 2 per fruit, oblong-elliptic to elliptic, (2.5–)3.0–3.8(–4.4) × (1.5–)1.8–2.3 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Coprosma cheesemanii has pointed leaves and pale bark.

Coprosma crenulata has much more leathery, broader leaves, light grey bark, and short 3-toothed stipules.

Coprosma microcarpa lacks the indented leaf tips and has small white fruit.

Coprosma linariifolia has distinctive long-sheathing stipules, unique from any other small-leaved forms of that species, and also has pointed leaves, and fruit that is white. or white sprinkled with blue-black flecks.

Coprosma acerosa and its relatives all lack the indented leaf tips and have fruit coloured bright blue, rarely white, often flecked with darker blue.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Te Waipounamu | **South Island**, Rakiura | **Stewart Island**, **Auckland Islands**, and Motu Ihupuku | **Campbell Island**.

HABITAT

Lowland to subalpine (0–1000 m.a.s.l.), forest, scrub and shrubland.

GENUS

Coprosma



Dart Valley, Otago. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 23/03/2012, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Stewart Island. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 27/01/2021, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma cuneata Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

Coprosma astonii Petrie

TAXONOMIC NOTES

In the past, South Island and Stewart Island/Rakiura plants were known as *Coprosma astonii*, but they are not specifically distinct from those further south.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September – October.

FRUITING

(December-)January – May.

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'

cuneata: From the Latin cuneum 'wedge', meaning wedge-shaped

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

COPCUN

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 | 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.
- 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-cuneata/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026