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.



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

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.



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

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

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
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The 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).
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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/coprosma-cuneata/

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