

# Coprosma dumosa

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

A bushy, small-leaved shrub with 'layered' branches; mostly common in higher rainfall montane forests and shrublands from the Kaimai Range southwards to Stewart Island." Also in the drier South Island. Leaves small, elliptic, 4-6mm long, in clusters of pairs, thick, with 1-2 pits on underside, main vein on underside reaching the leaf tip, with tiny hairs on margin in wet areas. Fruit orange or red (mostly white/translucent in North Island).

## FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow, Green, Violet/Purple

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect shrub up to 3 m tall, leafy appearance. **Branches** slender, quite robust, **bark** smooth and grey to grey-brown. **Branchlets** pubescent when young. **Leaves** opposite, numerous, pale grey-green to yellow-green, fascicled on short branchlets; **petiole** glabrous to pubescent, occasionally mid rib may have row of hairs present, rather thick in texture. **Lamina** elliptical to obovate, 5-13 × 2-6 mm, on seedlings may have hair fringed margin, generally margin glabrous, if hairs are present, they are on apical third of margin only, margin often dark coloured, upper surface may have midvein visible, may be pale coloured in centre at petiole end, underside glabrous, generally midvein visible. **Stipule** shallow triangle appearance, short sheath. Central tooth-like form with pairs of teeth either side which are well hidden by dense hairs, front pubescent. **Flowers** solitary or clustered, borne directly from branchlet stem. Male flowers 3-4 mm long (not including stamen), stamens 4, violet and yellow. Female flowers, sepals tiny, pale yellow, approximately 2 mm long (not including styles), styles 2. **Drupe** transparent white, or pale gold, or pale pink, or bright red, on short stalk 1-1.5 mm, spherical fruit 4-5 mm diameter. **Seeds** 2 per drupe.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Coprosma parviflora* which differs by the undersides of leaves being distinctly hairy (glabrous to glabrescent in *C. dumosa*), violet black fruits (white, pink or yellow in *C. dumosa*), and different chromosome number ( $2n = 132$  in *C. parviflora*,  $2n = 88$  in *C. dumosa*). Furthermore, *C. parviflora* is confined to the northern North Island.

*Coprosma ciliata* can be distinguished by having both long and short hairs (generally more hairs) on the branchlets (*C. dumosa* has only short hairs). The leaves of *C. ciliata* are generally thinner and hairier than those of *C. dumosa*. *C. ciliata* has larger fruit 6-7 mm compared to 4-5 mm. The colour of the fruit is throughout, whereas in *C. dumosa* the colour is only in the skin of the drupe.

*Coprosma pedicellata* a potentially taller plant (up to 7 metres), is very hard to tell apart unless fruit is present, drupe of *C. pedicellata* has marginally longer stem at 1.7-2.3 mm compared to *C. dumosa* at 1-1.5 mm. The fruit of *C. pedicellata* is rarely translucent white (most common colour for *C. dumosa*), more often dark purple or black.



*Coprosma tayloriae*. Photographer: Graeme Jane, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Huiarau range. April. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island from Kaimai Range south; South Island (rare in Fiordland), Stewart Island.

## HABITAT

Lowland to montane shrubland, scrub and forest. More likely to descend in altitude towards its southern extent.

## GENUS

Coprosma

## FAMILY

Rubiaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Coprosma dumosa* (Cheeseman) G.T.Jane

## SYNONYMS

*Coprosma parviflora* var. *dumosa* Cheeseman; *Coprosma tayloriae* A.P.Druce ex G.T.Jane

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

This species has been somewhat confused in its description historically with suggestions of it being a separate entity to *C. tayloriae*. Glenny and Cruikshank (2011) clearly analyse the two suggested species and conclude that some historical misidentifications of samples were used that were that of *C. pedicellata*, therefore suggesting that *C. tayloriae* is synonymous with *C. dumosa*.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October - November (-January)

## FRUITING

February-April (-October)

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Fleshy drupes are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed, and semi-hardwood cuttings. In warmer climates does best in a shaded site or planted within a deep, moist soil.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

## ETYMOLOGY

**coprosma:** From the Greek kopros 'dung' and osme 'smell', referring to the foul smell of the species, literally 'dung smell'

**dumosa:** Bushy or shrubby

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## NVS CODE

COPDMO

## 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

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. pp. 571-572

Glenny, D. & Cruickshank, J. 2011. Taxonomic notes on the New Zealand flora: *Coprosma dumosa* and *C. tayloriae*, are there two species?. *New Zealand journal of botany*, 49(4), pp.481-488

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, Christchurch, NZ. page 93

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by M.D. Ward (14 May 2024). Description adapted from Allan (1961), Wilson & Galloway (1993).

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## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026