

Coprosma foetidissima

COMMON NAME

hūpiro, stinkwood, shit shrub

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma foetidissima J.R.Forst. et G.Forst.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

COPFOE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 132

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Shrub with pairs of thin pale green leaves that smell strongly of dung when crushed. Leaves 1-2cm long, veins not easily seen on the underside, widest at middle and gradually tapering to tip and base, small dark teeth between the bases of the leaf pairs. Fruits yellow or orange.

DISTRIBUTION

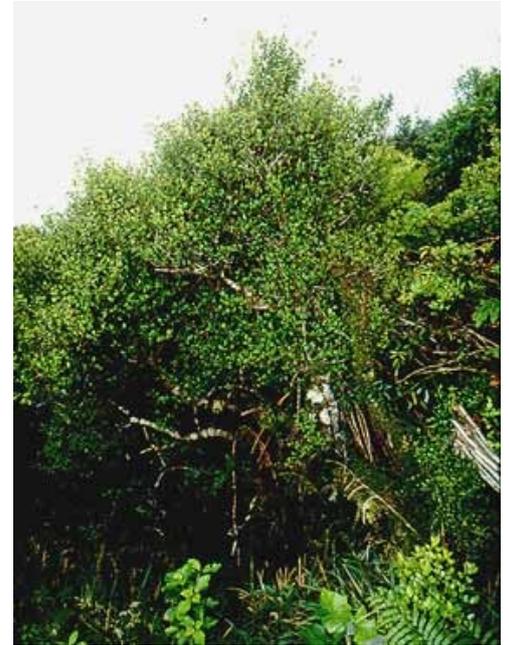
Endemic. North, South, Stewart and Auckland Islands. Occurs from Moehau in North Island southwards.

HABITAT

Occurs in coastal to subalpine forest, shrubland and occasionally grasslands.

FEATURES

Shrub or tree up to 3 m tall (can reach 6m occasionally). Open-branched with branches rather brittle. The bark is dark brown; branchlets are glabrous. Leaves are foetid (smelly) when bruised or crushed, and occur on slender narrowly winged petioles 8 - 15 mm. long. Stipules are truncate (see image), but produced into a usually conspicuous long denticle; ciliolate, with tufts of unequal hairs at tips. Lamina membranaceous to subcoriaceous, obovate to oblong to broadly ovate, obtuse, apiculate to mucronulate, 30-50 × 14-20 mm. Reticulations of veins evident, at least below. Flowers are solitary and terminal on branchlets. The drupe is pale to full orange, oblong and 7-10 mm and tastes horrible. long. For more information see full Flora description below.



Te Moehau, May. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



At Te Moehau, May. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

SIMILAR TAXA

Stunted forms of *C. foetidissima* may be confused with *C. colensoi* but the former can be distinguished by the smell of rotten eggs which is given off when the leaves are crushed. Also the fruit is not flecked with darker red.

FLOWERING

October - November

FRUITING

March - July

LIFE CYCLE

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'

foetidissima: Vile smelling

TAXANOMIC NOTES

This is the type species of the genus *Coprosma* J.R.Forst. et G.Forst.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/coprosma-foetidissima/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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