Coprosma macrocarpa subsp. macrocarpa

COMMON NAMES
large-seeded coprosma

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Large shrub with pairs of glossy dark green leaves inhabiting the Three Kings Islands. Leaves large, 9-13cm long, leaf surface bulging. Small papery sheath on stem between the base of the pairs of leaves. Fruit orange, clustered on short stems.

Fruits, ex. cult. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Fruits, ex. cult. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FLOWER COLOURS
Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Dioecious. Shrub or tree up to 5-(10) metres tall. **Branches** and branchlets stout, glabrous. **Petioles** stout more or less 12-25 mm long. **Stipules** connate into broad membranous sheath tipped by long sharp denticle. **Leaves** approximately 90-130 × 40-80 mm, subcoriaceous, broad- to elliptic-ovate, obtuse or subacute to mucronulate, midrib prominent, secondary veins and reticulations evident. **Male flowers** in compound glomerules on axillary peduncles 10-15 mm long, calyx-teeth minute, corolla approximately 9 mm long, subcampanulate, lobes ovate-triangular, acute, shorter than corolla tube. **Female flowers** 2-5 together, on simple or branched peduncles 20-70 mm. long, calyx-teeth acute, corolla tubular, widening above, lobes acute 1.3mm long, shorter than corolla tube, 4.5 mm long, stigma 14 × 0.6 mm, ovary 1.3mm diameter. **Drupe** orange-red, 17 × 12 mm, oblong. **Seeds** 2, pyrene, 9 × 6 mm, in cross-section roughly semilunar with distinctive undulating curved surface which includes longitudinal ridges.

SIMILAR TAXA
Most similar to *Coprosma macrocarpa* ssp. *minor*, in which the leaves are very similar but are papery (chartaceous) versus leathery(coriaceous). The female flowers if present may be differentiated (from *C. macrocarpa* ssp. *macrocarpa*) as they have several differences ovary 3 mm diameter (1.3 mm), corolla lobe 3 mm (1.3 mm), if present the fruit can also be used 7 × 6 mm (17 × 12 mm), pyrene 6.5 × 3.5 mm (9 × 6 mm). *C. macrocarpa* ssp. *minor* is not naturally found on the Manawatāwhi | Three Kings Islands.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. Confined to the Three Kings Islands. A single specimen found on Aorangi Island (Poor Knights) may be a recent introduction from the adjacent mainland, as this plant is now commonly cultivated in northern New Zealand. Naturalised in Auckland and around Wellington cities

HABITAT
Forest to scrub, gullies, above streams.

THREATS
A local endemic, common on but confined to the Three Kings Islands. A single record from the Poor Knights Islands is probably a chance naturalisation from the nearby mainland where it is now commonly cultivated

GENUS
Coprosma

FAMILY
Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY
Coprosma macrocarpa Cheeseman subsp. macrocarpa

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
May? – July(-September?)

FRUITING
August? – February?

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Fleshy drupes are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

WHERE TO BUY
Commonly sold by most retail plant nurseries

ETYMOLOGY
coprosma: From the Greek kopros ‘dung’ and osme ‘smell’, referring to the foul smell of the species, literally ‘dung smell’
macrocarpa: Large fruit

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY
Key to Coprosma species of New Zealand

NVS CODE
COPMCM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 44

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE
2004 | Range Restricted
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Northland: 2026 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the “Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau” Ford et al. 2026 report.

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

Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.

Cheeseman TF. 1887. notes on the Three Kings Islands. *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New Zealand,* Volume 20, 141-150.

Gardner R. & Heads M. 2003. Coprosma macrocarpa subsp. minor (Rubiaceae), a new subspecies from northern New Zealand. *New Zealand Natural Sciences Journal*, 28:67-80.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by MD Ward (December 17th 2025). Description adapted from Allan (1961) & Gardner 2003

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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21 July 2026