

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.

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.



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



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

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](#)

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, Lycopsidea, 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 [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](#) licence.

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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