

Coprosma obconica

COMMON NAME

coprosma

SYNONYMS

Coprosma obconica Kirk subsp. *obconica*

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma obconica Kirk

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

COPOBC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RRF

2004 | Gradual Decline

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Rare bushy small-leaved wide-angled shrub bearing white flattened fruit and with mottled brown or green juvenile leaves (also often present at the base of adult trees). Adult leaves in pairs, to 12mm long, oval, glossy, margins thickened and down-curved, tip blunt with a small sharp point.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (scattered populations near Taihape and one near Masterton), South Island (from D'Urville Island and North-west Nelson south to Southland and Otago, apparently absent from Westland).

HABITAT

Occupying a wide range of habitats, from estuarine shrublands, braided river bars, lowland podocarp forest to montane marble/limestone/dolomite karstfield, and very occasionally ultramafic boulderfields. The species is a basicole preferring to grow on base-rich substrates (limestone, marble, calcareous mudstone, recent alluvium) but typically in those habitats prone to physiological (e.g., ultramafic, dolomite, or estuarine) or climatic (e.g., drought prone, frost hollows, or with a seasonally high water table) stress.



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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Suberect to erect, heally branched,divaricating shrub 2–3.5 × 0.8–1 m. **Bark of mature twigs** brown or pale silver-grey, papery, inner bark green. **Adult leaves** of one type only, broadly elliptic to oblancelate, 3.5–12 × 1.5–2.5–(3.5) mm, light greyish green, sometimes mottled yellow. Male and female plants on separate plants. **Drupes** (fruits) greenish white or translucent white, variously striped or blotched dark violet-purple when fresh. **Pyrenes** (seeds) 3 × 2.2. mm, 2.5 mm deep, pale grey or white, clog-shaped. For a full description see de Lange & Gardner (2002) where this species is treated as *C. obconica* subsp. *obconica*.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to Coprosma species of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

Coprosma distantia which differs from *C. obconica* by its prostrate, trailing habit, uniformly cream to pale lemon-coloured fruits, larger, scarcely “notched” pyrenes (seeds) and nrDNA ITS and ETS sequence. Both *C. obconica* and *C. distantia* form a species pair, which are vegetatively distinguished from all other New Zealand *Coprosma* species by their leaf tips, which possess a nipple-like “bull nose” apical leaf prolongation.

FLOWERING

April–August

FRUITING

January–September

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Moderately easy from semi-hardwood or hardwood cuttings. Seed germinates easily but plants are very slow growing.

THREATS

Competition from weeds, and the loss of mainly lowland podocarp forest habitat are the main active threats. However, ongoing dolomite mining at Mt Burnett seriously threatens one of the largest populations known. Although many populations are small, the species is remarkably resilient if sites are given minimal management, e.g., hand pulling of weeds.

ETYMOLOGY

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

obconica: Inverted cone

WHERE TO BUY

Coprosma obconica is grown by a few specialist nurseries, and several botanic gardens. Plants are very slow growing, and without male and female plants fruit is rarely set.

ATTRIBUTION

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

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange PJ, Gardner RO. 2002. A taxonomic reappraisal of *Coprosma obconica* Kirk (Rubiaceae: Anthospermeae). *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 40(1): 25–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.2002.9512768>.

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. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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