

Coprosma rotundifolia

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Large bushy shrub with wide-angled twigs bearing pairs of small rounded slightly hairy and often purple-blotched leaves. Leaves 15-25mm long x 10-20mm wide, covered in small hairs, rapidly tapering to a sharp tip. Fruit orange or red on very short stalks.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rather slender shrub or tree up to 2-5 m tall; branches spreading to divaricate; branchlets pubescent to villous. Leaves on villous petioles 3-8 mm. long. Stipules obtuse, oblong, sheathing, pubescent to villous, usually with 1 denticle. Lamina membranous, hairy, especially on margins, dull green, red or red-green, often blotched brown, obtuse, sometimes apiculate, rounded to truncate to subcordate at base (usually on same plant): 15-25 × 10-20 mm. Reticulations of veins evident on both surfaces. Flowers in axillary clusters of 2-4. Male without calyx; corolla funnelform to subcampanulate, lobes ovate, acute, > tube. Female with more or less pubescent minutely toothed calyx; corolla tubular, lobes triangular, 4-5 mm long, subacute, sparsely hairy. Drupe red or white, depressed-globose, sometimes didymous, 4-5 mm diameter.

SIMILAR TAXA

Coprosma rotundifolia is superficially similar to and most often confused with *C. rubra*. *Coprosma rubra* differs from the much more widespread *C. rotundifolia* by its smaller leaves (10-18 x 6-13 mm cf. 15-25 x 10-20 mm in *C. rotundifolia*, female flowers whose calyces have conspicuous linear rather than inconspicuous minute teeth, and oblong, yellowish-white to white rather than red or white globose drupes. Both species may be found growing together.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North, South and Stewart Islands from about Kaitaia south

HABITAT

Lowland to montane. Usually in riparian forest and shrubland, especially on alluvial soils or those derived from calcareous parent materials.

GENUS

Coprosma

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma rotundifolia A.Cunn.



Stipule. Kaitoke Regional Park, Upper Hutt.
Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken:
10/09/2007, Licence: CC BY.



Adaxial surface of leaf. Te Marua, Upper Hutt.
Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken:
26/01/2010, Licence: CC BY.

SYNONYMS

Coprosma rufescens Colenso

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September - November

FRUITING

September - August

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and semi-hardwood cuttings. An attractive shrub to small tree that does well in dappled light. Should be planted in a free draining but moist, fertile 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'

rotundifolia: Round leaf; from the Latin rotundus and folium

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

COPROT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, PF, RR Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland](#)" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

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 HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsidea, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085
- 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>.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Allan (1961)

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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