

Coprosma rubra

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, PF

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Rare small bushy small-leaved wide-angled shrub with reddish bark and fuzzy twigs. Leaves thin, usually 10–15 mm long but up to 2.5 cm long, gradually narrowing to a winged stalk that has tiny hairs (lens needed), small black tip on stem between leaf bases, leaf margins sometimes hairy. Fruit yellowish-white.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub up to 4 m tall; branches rather slender, filiramous, weakly divaricating. **Bark** reddish brown; branchlets finely pubescent. **Leaves** membranous; petioles 4–6 mm. long more or less pubescent-ciliolate, winged. **Stipules** small, triangular, pubescent, usually terminated by single denticle. **Lamina** glabrous or nearly so, broad-ovate to oblong, obtuse, sometimes mucronulate, narrowed to subtruncate base; 10–25 × 6–15 mm; margins sometimes ciliolate; reticulations usually evident on both surfaces, at least when leaf fresh. **Male flowers** 1–6 on short branchlets; calyx 0; corolla funnelform, lobes about = tube, ovate, acute. **Female flowers** solitary or 2–3 together on short branchlets; calyx-teeth linear-triangular, obtuse, c. $\frac{3}{4}$ length of corolla-tube, corolla lobes > tube, narrow-linear. **Drupe** yellowish white, oblong, 4–6 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Coprosma rubra is superficially similar to the much more widespread *C. rotundifolia*. *Coprosma rubra* differs from *C. rotundifolia* by its smaller leaves (10–18 × 6–13 mm cf. 15–25 × 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. New Zealand: North Island (sporadic in Northland around the upper Wairoa River and Pīpiwai, more common from Hawke's Bay and Taihape south), South Island. Mostly eastern but often absent or very uncommon over large parts of its range.

HABITAT

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

THREATS

Previously listed as Data Deficient because in some parts of its range it appears to be in decline and in other areas it is extremely uncommon.



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GENUS

Coprosma

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma rubra Petrie

SYNONYMS

Coprosma rubra var. pendula (Colenso) Kirk

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September–January

FRUITING

February–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.

ETYMOLOGY

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

rubra: Red

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

COPRUB

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Data Deficient

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: TL 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 p.
- 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-rubra/>

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