

Coprosma serrulata

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Low growing sprawling shrub with pairs of leathery leaves which have the veins sunken into the upper surface and a finely notched margin (lens needed) inhabiting mountain areas of the South Island. Leaves 4-7cm long, rounded. Several small dark teeth on stem between leaf bases. Fruit red.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect to depressed bushy shrub up to 1 × 1 m tall; branches very stout though pliant, spreading, with white papery bark falling in flakes; branchlets rather stout, glabrous. Leaves on coriaceous winged petioles 10-15 mm long. Stipules broadly deltoid to subtruncate, glabrescent; denticles prominent 10-12 of more or less equal size, pale green to more or less colourless. Lamina somewhat cartilaginous, thick and coriaceous, 40-70 × 25-40 mm, subrotund to broad-obovate or obovate-oblong; apex rounded to subtruncate, mucronate; dark green, somewhat rugulose above, paler below; margins crenulate-serrulate. Reticulated veins evident on both surfaces. Male flowers several together on very short axillary peduncles; calyx 0; corolla subcampanulate, lobes 4-5, oblong-triangular, acuminate, ciliolate; stamens 4-6. Female flowers solitary on short axillary peduncles; calyx truncate, teeth 2; corolla tubular, lobes narrow-triangular, acute to subacuminate, < tube. Drupe 7-8 mm long, red, broad-oblong.

SIMILAR TAXA

Coprosma serrulata is not likely to be confused with any other *Coprosma* species. The large, thick, leathery leaves with their finely crenulate-serrulate leaf margins are quite unlike any other *Coprosma* species.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island: Marlborough and North-west Nelson south

HABITAT

Montane to lower subalpine. Clearings within forest, in shrubland, grassland, herbfield and at the base of talus slopes and screes amongst boulders. Usually found growing amongst other lower growing shrubs and grasses.

GENUS

Coprosma

FAMILY

Rubiaceae



Female flower and leaf detail, Borland Burn, Fiordland National Park. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 31/12/2020, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Stipule detail; Arthurs Pass above Otira. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 04/01/2015, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Coprosma serrulata Hook.f. ex Buchanan

SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1871)

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September - October

FRUITING

April - July

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and semi-hardwood cuttings but slow growing and intolerant of warm or humid conditions. Does best in a cool, south facing situation planted amongst rocks in a deep, fertile free draining soil. An attractive species that is sadly not often seen in cultivation

CULTIVATION

Occasionally offered by specialist native plant nurseries.

ETYMOLOGY

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

serrulata: Rough edged

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

COPSER

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

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, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I, Government Printer, Wellington.

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

ATTRIBUTION

Description based on Allan (1961)

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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