

Coprosma tenuicaulis

COMMON NAMES

swamp coprosma, hukihuki

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Erect bushy shrub with long thin twigs bearing pairs of thin rounded leaves on short flattened leaf stalks inhabiting wetland sites. Leaves mottled, 8-13mm long. Small tuft of longer hairs on hairy stem between leaf bases (sometimes a small dark tooth also present). Skin of fruit dark reddish-black to black, flesh dark purple.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub up to c.3 m tall; branches slender, filiramulate, subdivaricate, usually interlacing; branchlets slender, pubescent. Leaves on more or less winged, slender, pubescent petioles 3-5 mm long. Stipules small, triangular, subacute, more or less pubescent, ciliate, terminal tuft conspicuous. Lamina subcoriaceous, glabrous, orbicular-ovate, spatulate, obtuse, minutely apiculate, more or less 8-13 × 8-10 mm. Reticulations of veins evident on both surfaces. Male flowers in fascicles of 3-6; calyx 0; corolla funnelform, lobes more or less = tube, ovate, acute. Female flower solitary or in axillary clusters of 2-4 along short branchlets; calyx-teeth minute; corolla funnelform, lobes ovate, acute, = or > tube. Drupe black, globose, 3-4 mm diameter.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily recognised by the filiramulate, subdivaricating growth habit, and leaves which have darker margins and a lighter pigmented central blotch on the upper leaf surface. It is perhaps most likely to be confused with *Coprosma virescens* which has a superficially similar leaf shape but differs by its preference for better drained soils, greenish trunk, smaller leaves (5-9 x 3-6 mm cf. 8-13 x 9-10 mm in *C. tenuicaulis*), glabrous to glabrescent rather than pubescent branchlets, and yellowish-white, oblong rather than dark reddish-black to black, globose drupes

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands from Kaitaia to about Okarito

HABITAT

Lowland (rarely montane) in swamps and boggy ground, poorly drained shrubland and riparian forest.

GENUS

Coprosma

FAMILY

Rubiaceae



Stipule. Te Marua, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 14/04/2007, Licence: CC BY.



Coprosma tenuicaulis. Photographer: Wayne Bennett, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Coprosma tenuicaulis Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

Coprosma tenuicaulis var. *major* Cheeseman

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

July - October

FRUITING

March - May

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. Although it flourishes in swamps it is easily grown in poorly draining or free draining soils, in full sun or partial shade.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

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

tenuicaulis: Thin stalk

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

COPTec

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 At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, 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.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

Cheeseman, T.F. 1885. Description of three new species of Coprosma. Transactions of the Royal Society, 18: 315-317

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

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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