

Coprosma tenuifolia

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 shrub bearing pairs of mottled wavy leaves that taper to a narrow point. Twigs green flecked with red. Leaves 7–11 cm with a thin dark-tipped and usually hair fringed sheath around stem at base of leaves. Fruit orange or red, in short clusters.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rather slender shrub or tree up to c. 5 m tall, with stout glabrous ascending branches and branchlets. **Leaves** on slender pubescent petioles 10–25 mm long. **Stipules** broad-oblong, connate, obtuse, more or less ciliolate; denticle prominent, stout, acute to acuminate. **Lamina** membranous to thinly coriaceous, pubescent above on midrib, 70–110 × 30–45 mm, dull dark green, red-green or variously blotched, tinged or blemished with red, maroon or purple, ovate to oblong, acute, usually apiculate, rather abruptly narrowed into petiole; margins slightly wavy, sometimes crenulate. **Reticulated veins** fine, evident. **Male flowers** in clusters of 2–3 on short branchlets; calyx 0; corolla subcampanulate, lobes short, acute. **Female flowers** in clusters of opposite pairs, on short leafy branchlets; calyx-teeth short, ciliolate; corolla tubular, lobes short, acute. **Drupe** orange, ovoid, 7–8 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

The allopatric sister species of the Raoul Island endemic *Coprosma acutifolia* from which it differs by its larger (70–110 × 30–45 mm), ovate to oblong, acute, usually apiculate leaves which are dull dark green, red-green or variously blotched, tinged or blemished with red, maroon or purple. The leaves of *Coprosma acutifolia* are 60–90 × 20–35 mm, yellow-green, often mottled with dark green, narrow-ovate, ovate, ovate-elliptic to lanceolate, acuminate. The peduncles of *Coprosma tenuifolia* are unbranched while those of *C. acutifolia* are pedicellate (branched). The fruits of *Coprosma acutifolia* are oblong and orange red rather than ovoid and orange. Both species hybridise readily when grown together in cultivation.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (from Mt Pirongia and East Cape south to the Tararua Ranges).

HABITAT

Lowland to montane forest especially on alluvium and other base-rich soils. In the northern part of its range it is exclusively montane.



Herepai Ridge, Tararua Forest Park.
Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken:
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Stipules, lateral view. Herepai Ridge, Tararua Forest Park. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 09/03/2008, Licence: CC BY.

GENUS

Coprosma

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma tenuifolia Cheeseman

SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1886)

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November–January

FRUITING

March–May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

An attractive shrub to small tree on account of its colourful foliage. It does well in a shaded situation planted in a permanently damp, free draining, fertile soil. Despite its attractive foliage *Coprosma tenuifolia* is rarely seen in cultivation.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

UPL: Obligate Upland

Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION

Occasionally available from 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'

tenuifolia: Thin, slender leaves

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

COPTEF

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

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

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (10 January 2007): Description adapted from Allan (1961)
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MORE INFORMATION

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

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