

Coprosma wallii

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: PD, RF

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Bushy dark green shrub or small tree with orange under-bark and many very wide-angled branches bearing groups of pairs of small oval leaves and bulging dark violet to black strongly twinned (didymous) fruit. Leaves 5–10mm long, nearly as wide as long, with a triangular hairy ridge on the fuzzy stem between leaf bases. Seeds nearly round.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub to small tree (1.8)–2–(3) m. **Trunk** stout, clad in dark bubbly bark, under bark dark red. **Branches** stout, erect then spreading, somewhat pagodiform, branchlets stout, subtetragonous, densely clad in short, appressed, antrorse rufous hairs. **Petioles** pubescent, c.1 mm. **Seedling and juvenile leaves** rhomboid to ovate-oblong, densely clad in long, dark, rufous appressed hairs. **Adult leaves** leathery, glabrous, 5–9 × 5–7 mm, broad-ovate to suborbicular, broadly ovate-oblong, obtuse, subtruncate at base, dark green to green, upper surface very shiny, veins not evident, under sides paler, midrib and secondary veins evident. **Flowers** 1–(2–3) on short branchlets; male without calyx, corolla short, broadly campanulate, lobes broad-ovate, acute; female corolla funnellform, lobes triangular, acute, **Drupe** ovoid, didymous, 3 × 4.5 mm, dark violet black to black.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily recognised through a combination of its tall shrub to small tree habit, dark red under bark, leafy branches bearing numerous rather dark green, shiny, small leaves, and by the dark violet-black strongly twinned (didymous) fruits.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island, South Island and Stewart Island/Rakiura. In the North Island, rather local and with a predominantly eastern distribution from the Ripia River Headwaters to Wairarapa, with only two western populations at Erua and Paengaroa. In the South Island much more widespread in both the east and west (with new populations still being discovered mainly in the west and south). On Stewart Island/Rakiura, discovered in 2000 and still known from only one location.

HABITAT

Occupies a range of habitats from seasonally flooded, alluvial forest prone to very cold winters and dry summers, to riparian forest and subalpine scrub, or as a component of grey scrub or mixed Podocarp forest developed on steeply sloping basaltic or andesitic rock. The key feature of the majority of *C. wallii* habitat is that the substrates are rather fertile and the vegetation is limited by frost, water logging, or severe summer drought. Never associated with broad-leaved canopy trees.



Landsborough Valley. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 31/10/2012, Licence: CC BY-NC-SA.



Stipule. In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 15/04/2007, Licence: CC BY.

THREATS

Although not as threatened as once believed, several North and South Island populations are in vulnerable habitats or persist as remnant stands within rough pasture and/or along roadsides. In these sites recruitment is limiting or absent. Weeds remain a long term threat at virtually all known habitats. As a somewhat cryptic plant it is also vulnerable through the failure to recognise it. Some populations on track sides and near popular scenic attractions have been damaged by track maintenance, and in one site the erection of a toilet block.

GENUS

Coprosma

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma wallii Petrie

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

No information

FRUITING

Fruit may be present throughout the year. However, they are most conspicuous between March and May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed. Can be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings. Quite fast growing, doing best in fertile, moist alluvial soils but once established remarkably tolerant of a wide variety of soils and moisture regimes.

ETYMOLOGY

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

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

COPWAL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 132

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD, RF

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD, RF

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD, RF

2004 | Gradual Decline

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: PF, RF, Sp 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, Lycopsida, 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.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 August 2003. Description based on Allan (1961).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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