

Cordyline indivisa

COMMON NAME

tōī, broad-leaved cabbage tree, mountain cabbage tree

SYNONYMS

Dracaena indivisa Forst.f., *Dracaenopsis indivisa* (Forst.f.) Planchon, *Cordyline hookeri* Kirk, *Cordyline hectori* Colenso

FAMILY

Asparagaceae

AUTHORITY

Cordyline indivisa (Forst.f.) Steud.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Monocotyledons

NVS CODE

CORIND

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 38

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Palm-like small upland tree with few erect branches that have tufts of tough long wide pointed blueish-green leaves. Leaves 1-2m long by 10-15cm wide, usually erect, dead leaves forming a skirt at base of tuft, central vein reddish at base. Fruit small, blueish.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. In the North Island known south of Kohukohunui (Hunua) and Te Moehau (Coromandel Peninsula) but only really common from the Raukumara Ranges and northern portion of the Central Volcanic Plateau southwards. In the South Island widespread and common along the north and western portions of the island, more local in the drier eastern regions.

HABITAT

A feature of montane forests and subalpine shrublands (where it usually grows within gullies and at valley heads). Extending into lowland situations where physical geography allows for a cooler climate. The characteristic cabbage tree of the wetter, montane forests of the West Coast of the South Island.



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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout tree up to 8 m tall. Trunk up 0.4-0.8 m diam. Stems massive, usually unbranched or sparingly so. Leaves 1-2 x 0.1-0.15(-0.3) m, blue-green above, glaucous below, broadly sword-shaped, drooping with age, narrowed above base to a short petiole, midrib stout, broad and conspicuous, often tinged red, orange red or golden. Inflorescence a panicle arising from base of growing points under leaves. Peduncle stout, fleshy, short and more or less hidden in foliage. Panicle 0.6-1.6 x 0.3 m, very compact, with only first order branching from stout central axis. Basal bracts broad. Racemes 100-200 mm long, 20 mm diam. Flowers somewhat fleshy, faintly fragrant, crowded on axes. Pedicels obvious, 2-3(-5) mm long. Perianth 7-8 mm long, tepals fused for most of length, strongly recurved. Stamens more or less equal to tepal length. Stigma narrow-capitate. Fruit 6 mm dim., globose bluish to dark blue. Seeds 2 mm long, black, shining, 2 sides flat and one convex.

SIMILAR TAXA

A very distinctive species immediately separated from all other *Cordyline* species by the very broad blue-grey leaves, and smaller, tightly, compacted inflorescence produced at the base of the foliage tufts.

FLOWERING

(November-) December-January

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Purple, White

FRUITING

January-May

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from seed. However this species requires cool, damp soils and shady or cool situations, unless grown within the montane habitats it prefers. In lowland, warm climate situations few plants ever reach flowering size before dying.

THREATS

Not Threatened. However, some northerly populations have been decimated by goats, and it is presumed extinct on Te Moe Hau as a result of goat and livestock browse. The sudden death of some specimens in cultivation and in the wild has been attributed to Sudden Decline but it is still not clear if this species really does survive from this syndrome.

ETYMOLOGY

cordyline: From the Greek *kordyle* 'club'

indivisa: Unbranched

WHERE TO BUY

Rarely cultivated. Occasionally offered by garden centres and specialist native plant nurseries. A very attractive species which is prone to sudden collapse during high temperatures or in times of water stress. Does best in cool, damp soils, in semi-shade. Easily cultivated in the cooler parts of the country. It can be grown with great difficulty in lowland situations from Hamilton north but few plants ever survive to flowering size.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- de Lange, P.J. 2001. *Cordyline indivisa* in the Hamilton basin. Auckland Botanical Society Journal, 56: 66
- Greene, B. 2000. Mountain cabbage tree *Cordyline indivisa* in the Hunua Ranges. Auckland Botanical Society Journal, 55: 9
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- McCraith, S., Carlaw, G. 2001. Mountain cabbage tree *Cordyline indivisa* in the Hunua Ranges. Auckland Botanical Society Journal, 56: 20-21
- 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

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/cordyline-indivisa/>