Crassula kirkii

COMMON NAMES
Kirk's crassula

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPR, DPS, DPT
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
A creeping mat-like, moss-green to reddish-green, succulent herb, rooting freely at leaf nodes. Its leaves are linear-elliptic to oblong in shape, with blunt to pointed leaf tips. Flowers are miniscule, star-like, borne in leaf axils and are usually pink, pinkish-white, only rarely white or tinged green.

SIMILAR TAXA
Perhaps closest to C. ruamahanga but a large plant which has broadly obtuse leaves (these often turning reddish in exposed situations - a colour never seen in C. ruamahanga), and usually larger pink flowers with ovate to elliptic ovate petals. Cytologically this species has 2n = 84 chromosomes while C. ruamahanga have 2n = 42.

DISTRIBUTION
Present in New Zealand in sites along the South Wellington coast and on Stewart Island, parts of the West Coast and Southland. Also on the Chatham Islands.

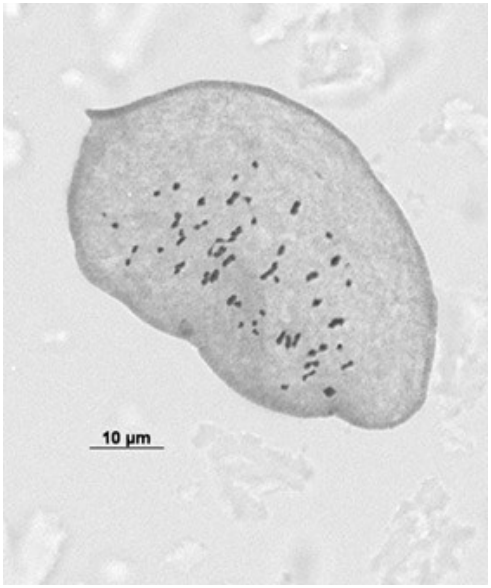
HABITAT
Brackish stream sides and turf, near lagoons or estuaries and at coastal stream mouths.

THREATS
This species requires open sites near brackish streams, lagoons and estuaries. Provided the turf habitats it occupies are kept open and free of taller vegetation Crassula kirkii is easily maintained. In New Zealand populations have declined in the northern part of its range due to weed invasions and coastal development.

GENUS
Crassula

FAMILY
Crassulaceae

AUTHORITY
Crassula kirkii (Allan) A.P.Druce et D.R.Given



Crassula kirkii ex Wainuiomata River Mouth—a meiotic preparation showing 2n = c78 (22I + 28II). Photographer: Brian G. Murray, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Wainuiomata River mouth. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 26/12/2006, Licence: CC BY.

SYNONYMS
Tillaea kirkii Allan, Tillaea diffusa Kirk nom. illeg.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
Flowers may be found throughout the year

FRUITING
Fruits may be found throughout the year

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Minute follicles are dispersed by wind and water and possiblty also by attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from the division of whole plants and fresh seed. Grows very easily with spontaneous plants readily arising from seed in cultivation. Can become a troublesome weed in some garden situations.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FAC: Facultative
Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION
Not commercially available. However, plants are held by several specialist native plant nurseries and at least one university. Due to its weedy nature it is unlikely to be widely grown. Nevertheless plants have potential as a ground cover in poorly drained soils, and will grow in heavy shade or strong sun. The pinkish-white flowers are pleasantly scented, and in strong light the foliage often turns dark red.

ETYMOLOGY
crassula: From the Latin crassus ‘thick’, meaning ‘rather thick’
kirkii: After Thomas Kirk (18 January 1828 - 8 March 1898), a NZ botanist and lecturer in natural sciences and regarded as a leader of botanical enquiry in NZ for over three decades. One of his most significant publications was Forest flora of NZ (1889) but he also contributed over 130 papers to the Transactions and Proceedings of the NZ Institute and other journals.

NVS CODE
CRAKIR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = c.78, c.84

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, Sp
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP
2004 | Gradual Decline
Jump to current conservation status

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Webb CJ, Sykes WR, Garnock-Jones PJ 1988. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. IV. Botany Division, DSIR, Christchurch.
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

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 February 2008. Description based on Webb et al. (1988)
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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/crassula-kirkii/

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