

Crassula kirkii

COMMON NAME

Kirk's crassula

SYNONYMS

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

FAMILY

Crassulaceae

AUTHORITY

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

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

NVS CODE

CRAKIR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = c.78, c.84$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Gradual Decline

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.

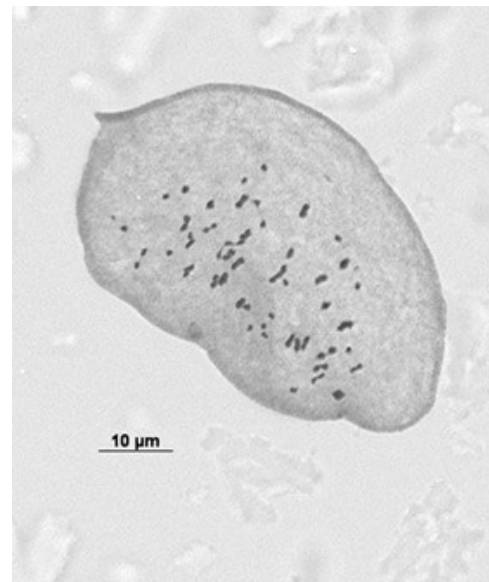
HABITAT

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

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).



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.

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 $2n = 42$.

FLOWERING

Flowers may be found throughout the year

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

FRUITING

Fruits may be found throughout the year

LIFE CYCLE

Minute follicles are dispersed by wind and water and possibly 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.

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.

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.

WHERE TO BUY

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.

ATTRIBUTION

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

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

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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