Crassula mataikona

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Green, Red/Pink

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Short-lived succulent, moss-like, herb forming diffuse clumps. The fleshy trailing stems are white or white tinged pink, and root freely at the nodes. Leaves pale green to pink (in exposed, stressed plants) fused at base, 1.3-3 × 1-1.5 mm, 0.8 mm thick, ovate-elliptic, flattened above, convex beneath; apex rounded or subacute. Flowers solitary in leaf axils, minute, 1.2-1.8 mm diameter, with 4 petals. Petals greenish with pink tips, often obscured by subtending calyx lobes. Mature fruits minute. Seeds black 0.4 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA
Distinguished from *C. manaia* by its greater size, tendency to form diffuse clumps, with the pale stems obvious between leaf clusters, and by its larger flowers and seeds. Distinguished from *C. sieberiana* and *C. colligata* by its smaller, moss-like, decumbent habit, with the stems scarcely erect, trailing or arching over the ground, and by the flowers solitary in the leaf axils. Introduced species *C. colorata* var. *acuminata* and *C. alata* might also be confused with it.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Awakino and South Taranaki Coastline, coastal eastern Wairarapa, Aorangi Range, Cape Palliser, and Wellington coastlines), South (Marlborough Sounds, and parts of the eastern South Island coastline as far south as Dunedin, and also known from several sites in inland central Otago). Also reported as a weed in Christchurch and Dunedin bowling greens.

HABITAT
A coastal species of open ground, often amongst *Zoysia*-dominated turf. It will not tolerate tall vegetation, and requires frequent disturbance to keep the habitats it frequents sparsely-vegetated.

THREATS
The habitats it occupies are frequented by introduced weeds. Because it is so small, *C. mataikona* is easily over-looked, and so has been rarely collected. It is easily confused with seedling *C. sieberiana* or *C. colligata* (two species with which it often grows), or even the much smaller *C. manaia*. As a result of the potential for these misidentifications some *C. mataikona* populations have gone unrecognised until recently. It is such incidental discoveries as these which suggest *C. mataikona* might be more common than previously believed.

Palliser Bay. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 03/10/2009, Licence: CC BY.

Palliser Bay. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 03/10/2009, Licence: CC BY.

GENUS
Crassula

FAMILY
Crassulaceae

AUTHORITY
Crassula mataikona A.P.Druce

SYNONYMS
Tillaea debilis Colenso ex Hook.f.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
Flowering has been observed throughout the year.

FRUITING
Fruiting plants 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
Very easily grown from small rooted pieces or seed. Although plants grow quickly they are prone to being invaded and smothered by other more aggressive weeds, such as *Cardamine* spp. or *Oxalis* spp.

PLANT OF THE MONTH
This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for May 2014 for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY
crassula: From the Latin crassus 'thick', meaning 'rather thick'

NVS CODE
CRAMAT

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

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, EF, NR, NStr, PF, RR, 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, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Wellington, Government Printer.
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.
Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. 1988: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. IV. Naturalised Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms, Dicotyledons.Christchurch, New Zealand, Botany Division, D.S.I.R..

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2005). Description adapted from Allan (1961) and Webb *et al.* (1988), supplemented with observations made from fresh and dried material.
Some of this factsheet information is derived from Flora of New Zealand Online and is used under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence.

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026