

Crassula multicaulis

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: Sp, EF, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Annual to short-lived perennial forming dark red, pink or green, moss-like mats; stems initially decumbent, soon ascending, rooting at nodes, much-branched from base, branches reaching up to 60 mm tall. Leaves fused at base, 1-3 x 0.6-0.7 mm, 0.3-0.4 mm thick, triangular-lanceolate, flattened above, strongly convex and keeled below; apex very acute, usually conspicuously apiculate. Flowers solitary in upper leaf axils, fragrant, stellate, 4-merous, 3.5-5 mm diam.; pedicels 2(-5) mm long, elongating at fruiting. Calyx lobes 0.5-0.8 x 0.5-0.6 mm, triangular, acute, usually apiculate. Petals 1.6-1.8 x 1.3 mm, broadly elliptic-ovate, white or pink, or pink-flushed, apex rounded, much > calyx. Scales 0.7 mm long, oblanceolate. Follicles smooth. Seed 0.5 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Crassula multicaulis is very distinctive, the combination of an almost annual habit, preference for ephemeral wetlands in seasonally dry habits, usually dark red colouration, keeled, apiculate leaves, and large, often pedicellate flowers with elliptic-ovate rounded petals mark it out from all other indigenous *Crassula*.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. In the North Island known only from one old record from Cape Palliser. In the South Island scarce in North West Nelson, southern Marlborough and Canterbury, North and Central Otago.

HABITAT

Coastal, lowland to alpine (0–1800 m a.s.l.) in open, seasonally damp ground, such as clay or salt plans or around tarn margins. It has also been collected from braided river beds.

THREATS

Field work by M. Thorsen (pers. comm.) suggests that this species is seriously threatened. Its preferred habitats are now largely drained or taken over by exotic weeds, and his fieldwork could only locate 2 small populations at a moderately high elevation where these agents of decline were less frequent (but still present). It has not been seen in the North Island since the 1950s, and is scarce north of Otago, with one site known in the 1000 Acre Plateau area of NW Nelson.

GENUS

Crassula

FAMILY

Crassulaceae



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 28/02/2009, Licence: CC BY.



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 28/02/2009, Licence: CC BY.

AUTHORITY

Crassula multicaulis (Petrie) A.P.Druce et Given

SYNONYMS

Tillaea multicaulis Petrie

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November - April

FRUITING

November - May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Minute follicles are dispersed by wind and water and possibly also by attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from rooted pieces, fresh seed and stem cuttings. An attractive plant with pleasantly scented flowers. In cultivation it normally forms a large, but short-lived mound. This species needs regular rejuvenation from fresh cuttings or rooted pieces to maintain the plant.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

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

NVS CODE

CRAMUL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 56$

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: EF, PD, RR, Sp

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: EF, RR, Sp

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: EF, DP

2004 | Sparse

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NR, NStr, PF, RR, TL 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.
- de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Norton, D.A.; Rolfe, J.R.; Sawyer, J.W.D. 2010: Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Christchurch, Canterbury University Press. 471pp
- 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), Webb et al. (1988) and de Lange et al. (2010).

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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Crassula multicaulis* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/crassula-multicaulis/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026