Crassula ruamahanga

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Perennial herb form small to large diffuse to dense bright green mats. Stems green or pink, prostrate, rooting at nodes, with ascending tips, much-branched. Leaves fused at base, 1.3-8 x 0.4-1.5 mm, 0.2-0.6 mm thick, lanceolate, linear-lanceolate or elliptic lanceolate, flattened or slightly concave above, convex beneath, apex usually sharply acute, shortly acuminate or apiculate, sometimes obtuse. Flowers solitary in leaf axils, scarcely fragrant, stellate, 4-merous, 1.8-2.5 mm diam.; pedicels 0.5-1 mm, scarcelty elongating at fruiting, Calyx lobes 0.8-1 x 0.4-0.6 mm, triangular or triangular-ovate, white or pink-flushed, acute, sharply acute, occasionally obtuse, slightly or much > calyx. Scales 0.5 mm long, cuneate. Follicles smooth. Seed 0.5 mm long.

Crassula ruamahanga. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Crassula ruamahanga, , Clevedon Bridge, Wairoa River, near Clevedon. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Crassula hunua A.P.Druce, from which it is only doubtfully distinct. From that species it is best distinguished by the acute tipped leaves and petals, persistent presence of a leaf apiculus, and generally by the sepal length exceeding the petals. However these characters seem to intergrade with C. hunua.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. Uncommon, known from historic and extant records from Wairoa River near Dargaville south to Stewart Island and including Chatham Island. In the North Island most common in the Wairarapa, and in the South Island on the Southland plains

HABITAT
Sea level to lowland (rarely lower montane) (0-500 m a.s.l.). An opportunistic species which can be expected to occur in any suitably damp, open habitat. It has been collected from near estuarine conditions through to leaking pipes in urban centres, gravel foot paths, and bowling green turf. Its favoured habitat seems to be river sides and muddy hollows and pools within lowland alluvial forest.

THREATS
Competition from other plants. Habitat destruction through heavy stock use, by cattle in particular.

GENUS
Crassula

FAMILY
Crassulaceae

AUTHORITY
Crassula ruamahanga A.P.Druce emend de Lange et Heenan

SYNONYMS
Tillaea acutifolia Kirk, Crassula acutifolia (Kirk) A.P.Druce et D.R.Given non. Crassula acutifolia Lam.; Crassula hunua A.P.Druce; Tillaea pusilla Kirk var. pusilla, Tillaea pusilla var. brevia Kirk, Crassula pusilla A.P.Druce et D.R.Given non C. pusilla Schönland

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Crassula hunua is now included within C. ruamahanga (see: de Lange et al 2007)

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
Flowers may be present throughout the year

FRUITING
Flowers may be present 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
Easy from rooted pieces, stem cuttings and seed. Can become a troublesome weed in damp soils and shaded sites, but makes an excellent ground cover or lawn on poorly drained soils. Flowers are sweetly scented.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACW: Facultative Wetland
Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

PLANT OF THE MONTH
This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for July 2004 for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY
crassula: From the Latin crassus ‘thick’, meaning ‘rather thick’

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 42,64,70,84,90

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

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, EF, RR Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the “Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland” Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, PF, 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

de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Keeling, D.J.; Murray, B.G.; Smissen, R.; Sykes, W.R. 2008: Biosystematics and Conservation: A Case Study with Two Enigmatic and Uncommon Species of *Crassula* from New Zealand. *Annals of Botany 101*: 881-899

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 by P.J. de Lange 4 May 2005. Description from de Lange et al. (2009).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

27 May 2026