Dacrydium cupressinum

COMMON NAMES
rimu, red pine

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Gymnosperms

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
A forest giant conifer once common and widespread, historically used as house building timber. Reaching up to 60m in height when mature, trunk is notable for having almost watermark like scar where bark has flaked off. The foliage is generally droopy, deep green, composed of overlapping spikey (firm to the touch) covered branchlets. The receptacle (berry-like fruit) is red-orange when ripe with either one or two brown-green seeds attached, an important food for Kakapo birds.



Female cones. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.

FLOWER COLOURS
No flowers

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Dioecious conifer 35–(60) m tall. Adult trees with trunk bare of branches for ¾ of length. **Trunk** stout, 1.5–2 m diam., bark dark brown, falling off in large thick flakes. **Wood** dark red. **Branches** in juveniles numerous, slender, branchlets pendulous. **Adult branches** few, spreading, branchlets slender, pendulous. **Leaves** dark green, bronze-green, red-green or orange, imbricate, those of juveniles 4–7–(10) mm, 0.5–1 mm wide, keeled, acute, linear-subulate, subfalcate, decurrent; those of subadults ascending, incurved 4–6 mm, rhomboid; of adults similar but appressed, 2–3 mm., rigid, subacute, trigonous. **Male and female "cones"** first appear on subadults. **Male cones (strobili)** solitary or paired, terminal 5–10 mm., oblong. **Pollen** yellow. **Ovules** solitary, terminal on up-curved branchlets. **Receptacle** a fleshy red or deep-orange cup 1–2 mm long. **Seed** oblong or elliptic-oblong, compressed in section, 3–3.8–(4) mm long, semi-glossy, dark-brown.



Fertilised cones. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.

SIMILAR TAXA
A very distinctive species which could not be confused with any other indigenous conifer. The very young juveniles have a superficial similarly to seedlings of silver pine (*Manoao colensoi*) but differ by their much finer, more numerous, dull rather than glossy red-green leaves.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: Te Ika-a-Māui | North Island (from North Cape (Otou) south), Te Waipounamu | South Island and Rakiura | Stewart Island. Uncommon in large parts of the eastern South Island. Facultatively extinct on Banks Peninsula, where one natural tree is all that remains.

HABITAT
Lowland to montane forest—occasionally ascending to subalpine scrub.

THREATS
Not Threatened, although as a forest-type it has been greatly reduced through widespread logging. Very few intact examples of rimu-dominated forest remain in the North Island.

GENUS
Dacrydium

FAMILY
Podocarpaceae

AUTHORITY
Dacrydium cupressinum Lamb.

SYNONYMS
Thalamia cupressina Spreng

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Rimu is the type of the genus *Dacrydium*.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
December–March

FRUITING
Fruits take a year or more to mature and co-occur with young female cones, they are most frequently seen between February and May.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Arillate seeds are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed. Can be grown from hard-wood cuttings but rather slow to strike.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACU: Facultative Upland
Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE
The first indigenous beer was brewed using the young tips of rimu (as spruce beer) by Captain Cook at Dusky Sound in 1773 (Kirk 1889).

CULTIVATION
Commonly cultivated and frequently sold by most commercial nurseries and outlets. A very popular garden tree.

PLANT OF THE MONTH
This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for February 2006 for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY
dacrydium: Tear drop
cupressinum: Cypress

NVS CODE
DACCUP

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 20

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The 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 Not Threatened Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.
Northland: 2026 | Regionally Not Threatened Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau" Ford et al. 2026 report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 3 February 2006. Description adapted from Allan (1961), Webb & Simpson (2001), fresh material and herbarium specimens.
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MORE INFORMATION

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