

Dianella nigra

COMMON NAMES

turutu, New Zealand blueberry, inkberry

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Loose tussock forming evergreen perennial herb, forming dense to open, diffuse clumps; rhizomes horizontally 150 mm (or more) long, strong and well developed. Leaves 250-800 x 12-18 mm, uniformly green to dark green, with distinct dark marginal bands 2-4 mm wide, discolorous, upright to strongly curved and distinctly drooping, more or less flat, lamina smooth and more or less glossy; margin and midrib of the leaf undersides smooth to scabrid, teeth often prominent; apex acute, leaf sheaths equitant, tightly clasping, surface light green to dark green with a reddish margin; apex acute to subacute. Inflorescence erect to spreading, up to 1 m long, exerted above the leaves; scape slender, arching, base asymmetric and up to 100 x 75 mm diameter; panicle 300-500 mm long, branches spreading, short, regularly spaced; cauline leaves subtending branches, leaf-like at the base but reducing in size and becoming bract-like distally; cymules 3-7-flowered; pedicels 10-17 mm long, slightly recurved, terete; bracteoles 1.0-1.2 x c.0.2 mm, narrow triangular, subtending pedicels caducous. Flowers nodding, 9-11 mm diameter, opening early morning, collapsing late afternoon, perianth segments strongly recurved at anthesis; sepals 4.4-4.5 x 1.6-1.7 mm, oblong, undersides olive-green flushed red-brown, upper surface paler, apex obtuse; petals 3.5-4.0 x 2.3-3.4 mm, obovate, white, midvein olive-green, apex obtuse to retuse; filaments 6, 1.3-1.4 mm long, white; anthers 1.3-1.4 x c.0.4 mm, yellow-brown, struma 1.2-1.4 x c.0.6 mm, obovate, yellow, minutely papillose; ovary 1.4-1.6 x 1.1-1.3 mm, green, more or less globular; style 1.7-2.1 mm long, white. Berry 8-20 x 7-10 mm, ovoid to oblong, grey-white and dull to strongly violet-blue and glossy, pericarp spongy. Seeds 1.8-2.1 x 2.3-3.0 mm, ovoid, black, shiny.



Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 06/02/2006, Licence: CC BY.



Rhizomes and leaf bases. Anakiwa, Queen Charlotte Sound. Photographer: Peter B. Heenan, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from *D. haematica* Heenan et de Lange and *D. latissima* Heenan et de Lange by open, loosely tussock forming habit, with dense to loose clumps, horizontally spreading rhizomes up to 150 mm long (sometimes more); light green to green leaf sheaths with reddish margins; green to dark green with darker marginal bands, curved, distinctly drooping leaves up to 0.8 m long and 18 mm wide with smooth or prominently scabrid leaf margins, acute leaf apex; inflorescences exposed from leaves, obovate (1.2-1.4 mm long) struma; and by the styles which are 1.7-2.1 mm long cf 1.4-1.5 mm long in *D. latissima* and 2.0-2.2 mm long in *D. nigra*. *Dianella nigra* may grow in wetlands

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands

HABITAT

coastal to montane (rarely subalpine) (1-1100 m a.s.l.). Colonising a wide variety of habitats from open coastal headlands, gumland scrub and less frequently peat bogs through to dense forest and subalpine scrub.

GENUS

Dianella

FAMILY

Xanthorrhoeaceae

AUTHORITY

Dianella nigra Colenso

SYNONYMS

Dianella intermedia Endl. var *norfolkensis* F.B.H.Brown

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November - December

FRUITING

December - May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Fleshy berries are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from the division of whole plants and from fresh seed. Often available from garden centres though one popular form sold erroneously as *D. intermedia* is not that species or it would seem *D. nigra* s.s. Its exact status requires further investigation.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

UPL: Obligate Upland

Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

dianella: Little Diana

nigra: Black

NVS CODE

DIANIG

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 16

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

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 At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPT, 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

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 prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/dianella-nigra/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026