

# Disphyma australe subsp. australe

## COMMON NAMES

horokaka, native ice plant, New Zealand ice plant

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Violet/Purple

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Trailing, succulent herb. Stem terete, glabrous. Short shoots prostrate, rooting freely at nodes. Leaves 3-angled, linear-lanceolate to oblong, acute, often mucronate, tapering to connate base, 6-40 × 4-9 mm; margins entire, smooth, very rarely with a few papillae towards the distal end of the keel. Flowers 20-40 mm diameter. Sepal keel entire, smooth. Petals uniformly white to deep pink, in 3-5 rows, 10-30 mm long. Stamens 4-6 mm long; inner filaments hairy at base. Stigmas (5)-6-8-(10). Capsule valves 5-10, with parallel or ± divergent expanding keels; placental tubercle rounded or 0. Seeds brown, obovoid, rugose, c. 1 mm long.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from the other New Zealand species by the leaf margin and sepal keel smooth (very rarely papillate near the apex), 3-angled, linear-lanceolate to oblong, acute and often mucronate leaves, and petals in 3-5 rows. The Kermadec endemic subsp. *stricticaule* differs by the short shoots mostly ascending, rarely rooting at nodes, papillate leaves and sepal keels, and 5 rarely 6 capsule valves.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Three Kings, North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands

## HABITAT

Coastal (rarely inland). Mostly on cliff faces, rock stacks, and boulder/cobble beaches, more rarely in saltmarsh and estuaries. Often in petrel scrub on offshore islands, and extending into coastal forest around petrel burrows. Occasionally on limestone or sandstone cliffs in lowland forest (Western Waikato).

## GENUS

Disphyma

## FAMILY

Aizoaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Disphyma australe* (Aiton) N.E.Br. subsp. *australe*



Ice plant. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.



Cape Terawhiti. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 01/11/2006, Licence: CC BY.

## SYNONYMS

Mesembryanthemum australe W.T.Aiton

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Forms natural intergeneric hybrids with both *Carpobrotus chilensis* and *C. edulis*.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

Present throughout the year

## FRUITING

Present throughout the year

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Fleshy capsules are dispersed by frugivory and possibly wind and water (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from rooted pieces and fresh seed. Does well in free draining soil within a sunny site. Not fussy about soil fertility or moisture regime. Some cultivar selection might be necessary as there is a diverse range of foliage colours, and flower colour ranges from white to fully pink. Forms natural intergeneric hybrids with both *Carpobrotus chilensis* and *C. edulis*.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

UPL: Obligate Upland

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

## ETYMOLOGY

**disphyma:** Two-nodule

**australe:** Southern, from the Latin australis

## NVS CODE

DISASA

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

## 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: 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 Not Threatened 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

Webb CJ, Sykes WR, Garnock-Jones PJ. 1988. Flora of New Zealand, Volume IV. Naturalised Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms, Dicotyledons. Botany Division, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Christchurch, NZ. 1365 p.

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

Description modified from: Webb, et al. (1988)

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## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/disphyma-australe-subsp-australe/>

## PDF DATE

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