

# Dodonaea viscosa

## COMMON NAMES

akeake

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Bushy shrub or small tree with flaky reddish bark and bearing long thin wavy leaves. Young parts sticky. Leaves 4-15cm long by 1-4cm wide, green to red-purple gradually narrowing to short leaf stalk and quickly narrowing to a rounded leaf tip. Flowers in panicles, small, yellow-green to red-green, developing into green dry 2-4-winged capsules.

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub or small tree 3-12 m. Bark reddish brown, flaking readily in irregular shards, flakes often detaching in masses toward trunk base; young branchlets flattened to triangular, glabrous. Young growth and buds sticky (viscid). Leaves sessile or on petioles 8-12 mm. long; lamina membranous, subcoriaceous to coriaceous, initially viscid, 40-150 × 10-35 mm, green, yellow-green, bronze or red-purple; linear-lanceolate, lanceolate, elliptic to oblanceolate; base narrowly attenuate to cuneate; apex obtuse, rarely emarginate or subacute; margins entire or (very rarely) finely denticulate. Inflorescences terminal, in panicles 30-80 mm long. Flowers yellow-green to red-green; pedicellate, pedicels 10-40 mm long, viscid, minutely puberulent, hairs often deciduous. Male flowers with 3-4, 1.3-3.0 mm long, lanceolate-ovate to oblong, caducous sepals; stamens 6-10; filaments 0.1-0.6 mm long; anthers 1.2-2 mm long. Female flowers similar though sepals narrower; style bifid, prominently exerted. Capsule 2-4-winged, 15 × 15 mm broadly ellipsoid, initially cream to red tinged, resinous, drying amber to pale brown, lustrous; wings 3-10 mm wide, even, membranous, base cordate, apex emarginate, margins undulate. Seeds 2.9-3.4 mm long, dark purple-black or black, elliptic-oblong to ovoid, compressed, biconvex.

## SIMILAR TAXA

None

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: Three Kings, North, South and Chatham Islands. Widespread throughout the world (see Harrington & Gadek 2009).

## HABITAT

Coastal to lowland forest, occupying a range of habitats from dunefields and boulder beaches through coastal scrub to lowland forest. Rarely forming a dominant tree in coastal forest and especially on offshore islands



Fruit. Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 25/03/2017, Licence: CC BY.



Staminate flowers. In cultivation ex Karekare. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 19/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

## GENUS

Dodonaea

## FAMILY

Sapindaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Dodonaea viscosa* Jacq.

## SYNONYMS

*Dodonaea viscosa* Jacq. subsp. *viscosa*

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

*Dodonaea viscosa* is a highly variable species with a complex, confused and many would say unworkable intraspecific taxonomy (Harrington & Gadek 2009). The most recent conclusion is that *Dodonaea viscosa*, spread as it is over all the continents (except Antarctica) and with a wide latitudinal spread is better treated as an 'ochlopecies' (Harrington & Gadek 2009). This is a difficult concept to understand but it may perhaps be best summed up as: a term used to reflect any extremely variable taxon forming numerous populations of genetically similar individuals that do not have a unique genetic history relative to the other variations of that taxon found elsewhere in its range. Such taxa would therefore show greater clustering in genetic space, but would not be genealogically exclusive. For this reason the New Zealand plant is referred to *D. viscosa* and no subspecies recognised (though the New Zealand plant has, of course been consistently referred to the type subspecies by other workers)

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

August - November

## FRUITING

November - April

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

*Dodonaea viscosa* is described by Allan (1961) as dioecious, however, New Zealand populations are either monoecious (i.e. male and female on the same tree), weakly dioecious (male and female on separate plants) or more rarely gynodioecious (comprising fixed female and mixed male / hermaphrodite plants). Hermaphroditic flowers are not described here. The sexual expression of this species would make a worth while study. Winged fruit are dispersed by wind and possibly also by water (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Often self-establishes in gardens. *Dodonaea* is an attractive fast-growing shrub or small tree. It is frost sensitive but otherwise remarkably resilient and will tolerate all but waterlogged soils. It should be planted in full sun. The most commonly cultivated form is *D. viscosa* 'purpurea' a colour-sport that sporadically occurs in wild populations, and which occasionally reverts in cultivation.

## CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE

The exceptionally hard wood of akeake (*Dodonaea*) was much favoured by Māori for making taiaha, patu and other weapons as well as garden implements. The name akeake meaning 'for ever for ever' is best summed up by the words spoken by Hauraki Tonganui on 2 April 1864 at the battle of Orakau "*E hoa, ka whawhai tonu ahau ki a koe, ake ake!*" meaning: "Friend, I shall fight against you for ever, for ever!"

## ETYMOLOGY

**dodonea**: Whispering

**viscosa**: Sticky

## NVS CODE

DODVIS

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 28

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

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.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I, Wellington, Government Printer.

de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Rolfe, J.R. 2011: Checklist of vascular plants recorded from the Chatham Island Islands. Department of Conservation, Wellington. 57pp.

Harrington, M.G.; Gadek, P.A. 2009: A species well travelled – the *Dodonaea viscosa* (Sapindaceae) complex based on phylogenetic analyses of nuclear ribosomal ITS and ETSf sequences. *Journal of Biogeography* 36: 2313-2323.

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.; Simpson, M.J.A. 2001: Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons. Christchurch, Manuka Press.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 11 November 2014. Description adapted from Allan (1961) and Webb & Simpson (2001), supplemented with observations made from fresh and dried material.

Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/dodonaea-viscosa/>

## PDF DATE

25 May 2026