

Dracophyllum cockayneanum

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Grass tree up to 12 m tall, confined to subantarctic islands. Leaves grass like, of two types (juvenile and adult), the leaves diagnostically stiffly, erect with the bases mostly covered in white tomentum and with the margins prominently ciliated. Flowers white, in terminal racemes.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tree 3–12 m tall. **Bark** on old branches brown, rough to occasionally finely fissured, young stems reddish brown. **Leaves** dimorphic: juvenile leaves spirally arranged along branches, spreading; lamina sheath 15–20 × 12–14 mm; shoulders tapering to rounded, margin ciliate; lamina 100–140 × 4–6 mm, linear–triangular; adaxial surface scabrid to pubescent, abaxial surface glabrous to scabrid, margins densely pubescent; adult leaves erect to spreading; lamina sheath 12.0–18.3 × 9.0–13.0 mm, light green, coriaceous, shoulders rounded to truncate and margin ciliate in the top half; lamina 40.0–140.0 × 1.5–4.0 mm, linear to linear–triangular, adaxial surface tomentose; abaxial surface with upper half covered in scabrid hairs, slightly striated; margins serrulate and densely pubescent with 60–70 teeth per 10 mm. **Inflorescence** a terminal raceme on lateral branchlets; shorter than leaves, erect to drooping, dense, 30–70 mm long, linear–oblong; inflorescence bract persistent, over-topping flowers, 15–30 × 1.5–2.0 mm, subulate, adaxial surface scabrid, abaxial surface glabrous, margins ciliate. **Flowers** 6–20, pedicellate; flower bracts caducous, over-topping flowers, 8.0–14.0 × 3–6 mm, ovate–lanceolate to ovate; adaxial surfaces pubescent or pubescent in upper third only; abaxial surfaces glabrous, margins ciliate; pedicels straight, 1–3 mm long, glabrous to pubescent. **Sepals** 4.0–5.0 × 2.0–2.5 mm, ovate–lanceolate, shorter than the corolla tube, surfaces glabrous but occasionally pubescent in the top half of adaxial surface; margins ciliate. **Corolla** white to occasionally light pink; corolla tube 4.0–6.0 × 3.0–3.5 mm, narrowly campanulate, widened at mouth; corolla lobes reflexed, 1.5–2.0 × 1.5–2.0 mm ovate–triangular, shorter than corolla tube surfaces glabrous. **Stamens** inserted on corolla tube in upper $\frac{1}{3}$, filaments 0.5–1.0 mm long; anthers included, 0.7–0.8 mm long oblong, pink. **Ovary** 1.5–2.0 × 1.2–2.0 mm, obovate, apex truncate; nectary scales 1.2–1.5 × 0.6–1.0 mm, rectangular, apices subacute to obtuse; style included, 1.5–2.0 mm long, glabrous, lengthening in fruit; stigma five-lobed. **Fruit** pedicellate, 2.5–3.5 × 3–4 mm, obovoid, light brown, apex truncate, glabrous. **Seeds** 0.65–0.7 mm long, filiform, light brown, testa slightly reticulate.



Leaves are mostly white tomentose in the bottom half with a ciliate margin. In low elevation scrub, near Smiths Harbour, January 2023, Strannik Auckland Island Expedition. Photographer: Alex Fergus, Date taken: 19/01/2023, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Ciliate margin of the inflorescence bract. In low elevation scrub, near Smiths Harbour, January 2023, Strannik Auckland Island Expedition. Photographer: Alex Fergus, Date taken: 19/01/2023, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

Dracophyllum cockayneanum is recognised by the erect stiff leaves that are mostly white tomentose in the bottom half and with the margin ciliated. The broad sheaths have rounded to truncate shoulders covered with dense white cilia (Venter 2009). The pedicel is 1–3 mm long and the flower bracts are caducous having the upper third of the adaxial surface covered in dense long white hairs. This Subantarctic endemic differs from *D. longifolium* with which it is sympatric by the erect stiff adult leaves that are white tomentose in the bottom half, and by the rounded to truncate shoulders of the lamina sheath; by the ciliate margin of the inflorescence bract; by the sepals which are shorter than the corolla tube; and by the truncate apex of the ovary (Venter 2009).

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Auckland Islands and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku.

HABITAT

Widespread from the coast toward the main summit ridges in tussock grassland, mires and on the margins of forest (Auckland Islands only) or in recently disturbed ground.

THREATS

Abundant within its narrow geographic range.

GENUS

Dracophyllum

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Dracophyllum cockayneanum Du Rietz

SYNONYMS

Dracophyllum longifolium var. *cockayneanum* (Du Rietz) W.R.B.Oliv.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Treated as a variety by Oliver (1952) and Allan (1961) though initially described as a species by Du Rietz (1930). Venter (2009) argues for species rank (though within *Oreothamnus*). Therefore species rank (but in *Dracophyllum*) is followed here.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Throughout the year

FRUITING

Throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult—should not be removed from the wild.

ETYMOLOGY

dracophyllum: Dragon leaf, from its likeness to the dragon tree of the Canary Islands

cockayneanum: Named after Leonard Cockayne FRS (7 April 1855 - 8 July 1934) who is regarded as New Zealand's greatest botanist and a founder of modern science in New Zealand

NVS CODE

DRACOC

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE
2004 | Range Restricted
[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.
Du Rietz GE. 1930. The fundamental units of biological taxonomy. *Svensk Botanisk Tidskrift*. 24: 333–428.
Oliver WRB. 1952. A revision of the genus *Dracophyllum*: (Supplement). *Transactions of the Royal Society of New Zealand* 80: 1–17.
Venter S. 2009. A taxonomic revision of the genus *Dracophyllum* Labill. (Ericaceae). Unpublished Phd Thesis. Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, NZ. 551 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 13 June 2012. Description adapted from Venter (2009).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/dracophyllum-cockayneum/>

PDF DATE

07 June 2026