

Dracophyllum densum

COMMON NAMES

dward inaka

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, RR

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Prostrate shrub, usually of open infertile areas amongst sandstone, granite or exposed coal measures, Branches bearing shortly erect leaves, these tightly clasping the stem, and with somewhat sharply rounded apices. Flowers white, solitary and almost obscured by the surrounding sepals.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Scrambling sub-shrub or low shrub, 0.3–0.5 m tall. Branches spreading, decumbent or prostrate. Bark on old branches dark grey to brown, deeply fissured, young stems grey to reddish brown. Leaves spirally along branches, imbricate, erect and appressed to stem, old leaves present; lamina sheath 2–5 × 2–4 mm, olive green, membranous, tapering and margin ciliate; lamina 6–22 × 0.7–1.0 mm, linear, olive green, adaxial surface flat, abaxial surface rounded with a keeled apex, surfaces glabrous with a tuft of scabrid hairs at the base on adaxial surface, slightly striated; margins serrulate with 25–30 teeth per 10 mm; apex obtuse to acute. Inflorescence a solitary terminal flower on lateral branchlets, sessile, shorter than leaves, erect, mostly hidden by leaves; flower bract 3.5–7.0 × 2–3 mm, shorter than to equaling flower, foliose, coriaceous to rigid and hard, broadly ovate at base, surfaces glabrous with a tuft of scabrid hairs at base of adaxial surface, margins serrulate, apex obtuse to acute. Sepals 3.5–5.7 × 1.5–2.0 mm, lanceolate, equaling corolla tube, top half pubescent on adaxial surface; margins toothed; apex subacute to obtuse. Corolla white; corolla tube 3.5–5.0 × 1.0–1.5 mm, cylindrical; corolla lobes shorter than corolla tube, 1.5–2.0 × 1.0–1.3 mm, ovate-triangular to triangular; spreading horizontally to reflexed, apical ridge present, apices acute; adaxial surface papillate. Stamens inserted on corolla tube in upper third, filaments 0.5–0.55 mm long; anthers included, rectangular, light yellow, 1 mm long. Ovary 1–2 × 1.0–1.4 mm, obovate, apex truncate; nectary scales 0.9–1.0 × 0.6–0.8 mm, rectangular, apices retuse to irregularly toothed; style included, 1.5–1.55 mm long, glabrous, lengthening in fruit; stigma five-lobed. Fruit sessile, 1.3–2.0 × 1–2 mm, light brown, depressed-obovoid to obovoid, apex truncate, glabrous. Seeds 0.45–0.5 mm long, ovoid, light brown, testa slightly reticulate.



Denniston Plateau. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 15/02/2014, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Denniston Plateau. Photographer: Joe Potter Butler, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA

Dracophyllum densum is recognised by its prostrate habit; dark grey deeply fissured bark; long persistent foliage; by the erect leaves clasping the stem; leaf apices obtusely acute; by the solitary flowers with subacute to obtuse sepals which equal the corolla tube length; and by the short capsule which is widest at the apex. *Dracophyllum densum* is most similar to *D. politum* from which it differs the presence of a tuft of scabrid hairs on the leaf lamina and by the leaf lamina marginal teeth numbering 25–30 rather than 90–100 in *D. politum*. The flowers of *D. densum* have bracts $3.5\text{--}7.0 \times 2.0\text{--}3.0$ mm cf. $2.0\text{--}3.0 \times 0.7\text{--}0.8$ mm in *D. politum*, and the bract margins in *D. densum* are ciliate rather than serrulate. In *Dracophyllum densum* the sepals equal the length of the corolla tube, while they are longer than the corolla tube in *D. politum*. In *D. densum* the apex of the corolla lobe is acute rather than obtuse, while the ovary apex is truncate rather than rounded. The surface of the seed of *D. densum* is also weakly reticulate rather than prominently so like which is typical of *D. politum*. Venter (2009) further notes that epicuticular wax platelets are absent in *D. politum* but conspicuous and prominent in *D. densum*.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (North-West Nelson, westerly from Karamea to near Westport (common in the Paparoa Ranges and on the Denniston Plateau).

HABITAT

Montane to subalpine on mountain summits, ridgelines, terraces and plateau in shrubland, herbfield, tussock grassland or grassland overlying infertile soils derived from sandstone, conglomerate or granite. Often on slate or coal measures.

THREATS

Locally abundant in the places it has been reported from, but some populations overlying coal measures are threatened by coal mining and others potentially so.

GENUS

Dracophyllum

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Dracophyllum densum W.R.B.Oliv.

SYNONYMS

None (described in 1952)

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January - April

FRUITING

March - June

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

NVS CODE

DRADEN

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, RR

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RR

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Venter, S. 2009: A taxonomic revision of the genus *Dracophyllum* Labill. (Ericaceae). Unpublished Phd Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (9 September 2012). Description adapted from Venter (2009)

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 June 2026