

Dracophyllum fiordense

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Small shrub or tree bearing a robust tuft of thick grass-like leaves at tip of the usually single trunk inhabiting mountains in Fiordland and central Westland. Leaves reddish at tips, 40–70 cm long × 4–5 cm at widest point, tip often curled. Flowers in a robust dense spike from under the leaf tufts.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A tree 1.5–5.0 m tall. **Branches** erect and sparsely branched. **Bark** on old branches greyish–brown, deeply fissured to flaky at the base on old stems and branches, young stems yellowish brown. **Leaves** crowded on tips of branches; lamina sheath 60–87 × 30–43 mm, coriaceous, striate, tapering and margin smooth; lamina coriaceous, linear–triangular to lanceolate, 400–700 × 40–50 mm, surfaces glabrous, prominently striated; margin denticulate with 10–15 teeth per 10 mm; apex acute and often spiraling. **Inflorescence** an axillary panicle some distance below the leaves; much shorter than the leaves, drooping, dense, 100–150 mm long, pyramidal, densely branched; rachis and pedicels glabrous; inflorescence axis 5.6–7.7 mm in diameter; basal inflorescence branch 20–50 mm long, widely spreading; inflorescence bracts caducous, over topping flowers, light green, ovate–triangular at base, 40–51 × 18–21 mm, surfaces glabrous, margins ciliate. **Flowers** hidden by leaves, 113–120, in groups of more than 10 at base of inflorescence; bracteoles caducous, longer than the perianth and situated in the middle of the pedicel, 4.5–5.0 × 0.8–1.0 mm, glabrous; pedicels straight, 0.8–1.5 mm long, glabrous.

Sepals ovate, 2.0–2.5 × 2.0–3.0 mm, shorter than the corolla tube, striate, surfaces glabrous; margins ciliate. **Corolla** light to dark pink; corolla tube broadly campanulate, widened at mouth, 2.0–2.5 long and wide; corolla lobes reflexed, oblong, equaling the corolla tube, 1.5–2.0 × 1.3–1.5 mm, apices obtuse; surfaces glabrous. **Stamens** hypogynous, filaments 2.3–2.5 mm long; anthers exserted, oblong, light yellow and 1.5–2.0 mm long. **Ovary** subglobose, 0.9–1.0 × 1.3–1.5 mm, glabrous, apex round; nectary scales rectangular, 0.6–0.7 mm long and wide, apex retuse; style exserted, 1.8–2.0 mm long, glabrous; stigma five–lobed. **Fruit** reddish brown, 2.0–2.8 × 2.5–4.0 mm, depressed– globose, apex round, glabrous. **Seeds** brown, ovoid, 0.55–0.6 mm long, testa slightly reticulate.



upper Cleddau, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Franklin Mountains, Fiordland. Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken: 14/11/2012, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA

Dracophyllum fiordense is recognised by the unbranched (occasionally only once) stems; very large and long leaves with narrowed lamina bases and prominently spiraled apices; the panicle situated below the leaves; sepals shorter than the corolla tube with spaced cilia on the margin; bracteoles longer than the flower with a few teeth at the apex; anthers exerted; and by the short and very broad capsule. *Dracophyllum fiordense* is related to *D. menziesii* and *D. townsonii* as all species possess axillary panicles situated below the leaves. It resembles *D. traversii* somewhat but differs in the unbranched to sparsely branched stems, the large leaves with spiralled apices and the inflorescences situated below the leaves. The panicles are more branched than those of *D. menziesii* but closely resemble those of *D. townsonii* in size and shape.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (south Westland – western Otago and Fiordland as far north as the Waitaha and Hokitika River catchments).

HABITAT

Lowland to subalpine on steep ridge lines, cliff faces, bluffs, ravines, gully heads and the upper slopes of glaciated valleys. Usually found in low subalpine forest and shrubland, less commonly in tussock grassland.

GENUS

Dracophyllum

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Dracophyllum fiordense W.R.B.Oliv.

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January–March

FRUITING

Throughout the year

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Minute seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild. Don't be tempted—take photographs instead!

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for June 2020](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

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

fiordense: Of Fiordland

NVS CODE

DRAFIO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[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.

Norton DA. 2018. A substantial northward extension of the range of *Dracophyllum fiordense* W.R.B. Oliv. (Ericaceae), Westland, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 56(4): 430–437.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.2018.1491863>.

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (29 March 2012). Description adapted from Venter (2009).

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

27 May 2026