

Dracophyllum latifolium

COMMON NAME

neinei, needle-leaved neinei, spider wood

SYNONYMS

Dracophyllum latifolium var. *matthewsii* Carse' *Dracophyllum matthewsii* (Carse) Carse

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Dracophyllum latifolium A.Cunn.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

DRALAT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 26

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Spindly tufted tall shrub of upland forests. Leaves broad, grass-like, with drooping tips in tufts at the end of branches showing obvious scars from old leaves. Young leaves reddish. Flowers in a robust dense reddish spike from the top of leaf tufts.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island

HABITAT

Lowland to subalpine. Often in kauri (*Agathis australis*) forest in the northern part of its range, where it grows on gentle to steep slopes in river valleys, along stream banks. South of Auckland it becomes more common in montane areas, where it is often common on mountain slopes and ridgelines extending into cloud forest and subalpine scrub. In some of these habitats it grows with *Dracophyllum traversii*.



Te Moehau, November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Te Moehau, December. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

FEATURES

Tree 3–10 m tall. Branches form an open candelabrum-shaped crown. Bark on old branches greyish–brown to brown, rough or flaky, young stems yellowish brown. Leaves crowded at tips of branches in a bromelioid manner; lamina sheath 30–65 × 18–55 mm, striate, membranous, tapering and margin smooth; lamina linear–triangular to rarely lanceolate, 100–800 × 12–30 mm, surfaces glabrous, prominently striated; margins serrate to denticulate with 2–4 teeth per 10 mm; apex thickened. Inflorescence shorter than leaves, erect to drooping, dense, 100–400 mm long, oblong to pyramidal and densely branched; rachis and pedicels pubescent to tomentose; inflorescence axis yellowish to light green, 15–20 mm in diameter; basal inflorescence branch 30–60 mm long, sub erect to at right angles with inflorescence axis; inflorescence bracts caducous, over topping flowers, whitish at base and pink tipped, broadly ovate to ovate–triangular at base, 105–210 × 20–35 mm, surfaces glabrous, margins ciliate, apices acute. Flowers 600–2000+, in groups of 5–10 at base of inflorescence, pedicellate; bracteoles caducous, recaulescent, with one bracteole situated just below the perianth and the other in the middle of the pedicel, shorter than flower, 1.5–5.5 × 0.5–1.7 mm, glabrous; pedicels straight, 1.0–2.5 mm long, pubescent to tomentose. Sepals broadly ovate to triangular, 0.7–1.5 × 1.0–1.7 mm, shorter than the corolla tube, striate, adaxial surfaces glabrous; abaxial surfaces pubescent; margins with upper third toothed. Corolla dark pink to dark red; corolla tube campanulate to broadly campanulate, widened at mouth, 1.5–2.0 × 1.5–2.5 mm; corolla lobes reflexed, oblong to ovate–triangular, longer than corolla tube, 1.5–2.0 long and wide, apices obtuse, rarely subacute; surfaces glabrous. Stamens inserted at top of corolla tube, filaments (0.5–)1.0–1.2 mm long; anthers exerted, rectangular, pink turning light yellow with age and 1.3–1.5 mm long. Ovary ovate, 0.8–1.0 × 1.0–1.5 mm, glabrous, apex round; nectary scales rectangular to oblong, 0.6–1.2 × 0.8–1.0 mm, apex retuse to irregularly toothed; style exerted, 1.0–1.7 mm long, glabrous; stigma clavate to five–lobed. Fruit not included in persistent calyx, reddish to purplish brown, 1–2 × 2–4 mm, depressed–globose, apex round and glabrous. Seeds yellowish brown, ovoid, 1.2–1.3 mm long, testa slightly reticulate.

SIMILAR TAXA

Dracophyllum latifolium is recognised by the rough to flaky bark; leaves recurved in a bromelioid manner, glabrous, thinly textured; panicle slender, erect or drooping with the pubescent branches at acute angles, flowers purplish–red, capsules 2.0–2.5 mm in diameter with the pedicels 1.5–2.5 mm long. Young plants form erect unbranched stems with a tuft of leaves at the top, a character shared with *D. fiordense*, *D. elegantissimum*, *D. townsonii*, and *D. traversii*. Of these species *Dracophyllum latifolium* never grows with *D. fiordense*, *D. elegantissimum*, *D. townsonii*. It sometimes grows with *D. traversii* in the northern part of that species range. From that species it differs in having narrower leaves (12–30 mm compared to 40–50 mm), lamina margin serrate to denticulate (not serrulate) and having fewer teeth on the lamina margin (2–4 compared to 18–20 per 10 mm). The flowers are in groups of 5–10 (compared to more than 10), sepals shorter than the corolla tube longer with the upper half distinctly toothed not ciliate, corolla tube shorter and narrower, ovary ovate and much smaller with the seeds larger than that of *D. traversii*.

FLOWERING

September–May

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink

FRUITING

Throughout the year

LIFE CYCLE

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! *Dracophyllum latifolium* is occasionally stocked by specialist nurseries (take care though to check the soil surrounding the rootstock to see if the plants on offer have been dug from the wild, as plants dug from the wild often persist for a few months before dying), and if grown from seed such plants may occasionally thrive in cultivation. Does best in a semi-shaded site, planted in a humus enriched, moist (not water logged) soil.

ETYMOLOGY

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

latifolium: Broad leaf

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (30 March 2012). Description adapted from Venter (2009)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

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

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Dracophyllum latifolium* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/dracophyllum-latifolium/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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