

# Dracophyllum menziesii

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPT

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## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Low-growing reddish shrub with multiple branches topped by a tuft of wide grass-like leaves inhabiting the southwest of the South Island. Leaves tough, 90–220mm long by 9–17mm wide, margin rough to touch. Flowers tubular, in crowded spikes underneath the leaves.

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect stemmed, sparingly branched shrubs 0.5–1.0 m tall. Bark on old branches grey, smooth, rarely deeply fissured at base, young stems brown. Leaves crowded at tips of branches in a bromelioid manner; lamina sheath light brown, 10.0–20 × 7.0–20.4 mm, coriaceous, striate; tapering, margins membranous and smooth; lamina coriaceous, linear-triangular to occasionally triangular, 90–220 × 9–17 mm, surfaces glabrous, prominently striated; margins cartilaginous, serrate, thickened, with 20–32 teeth per 10 mm; apex thickened, acute. Inflorescence an axillary panicle situated below the leaves; shorter than the leaves, drooping, dense, 50–150 mm long, oblong and sparsely branched; rachis and pedicels pubescent; inflorescence axis mid green to reddish brown, 1.5–2.4 mm in diameter; basal inflorescence branch 11.0–12.4 mm long, widely spreading; inflorescence bracts caducous, over-topping the flowers, dark green to red, broadly ovate at base, 12.0–19.2 × 6.0–8.8 mm, adaxial surfaces glabrous to sericeous in basal half; abaxial surfaces glabrous, margins ciliate. Flowers 8–38, in groups of three 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, 4–5 × 0.8–1.0 mm, glabrous; pedicels straight, 1.5–5.5 mm long, tomentose. Sepals ovate to broadly ovate, 2.5–3.5 × 1.5–2.5 mm, shorter than the corolla tube, striate, surfaces glabrous; margins ciliate. Corolla white to red; corolla tube campanulate, widened at mouth, 4–7 × 3–5 mm; corolla lobes reflexed, ovate-triangular, shorter than corolla tube, 2.0–4.5 × 1.1–1.6 mm, apices obtuse; surfaces glabrous. Stamens inserted at top of corolla tube, filaments 0.5–1.2 mm long; anthers included, oblong, light yellow and 1.3–1.5 mm long. Ovary obovate, 1.3–1.5 × 1.7–2.0, glabrous, apex round; nectary scales rectangular, 0.7–0.8 long and wide, apices retuse; style included, 2.5–3.5 mm long, glabrous, lengthening in fruit; stigma five-lobed. Fruit reddish brown, 1.5–2.5 × 2.5–5.0 mm, depressed-globose, apex round, glabrous. Seeds dark brown, ovoid, 0.55–1.3 mm long, testa slightly reticulate.



Livingston Mountains. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Franklin Mountains, Fiordland. Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken: 15/11/2012, Licence: CC BY.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Dracophyllum menziesii* is recognised by its shrubby habit, mostly unbranched (and if so then sparingly) growth habit; leaves which are crowded in a bromelioid fashion, and which are short and broad lamina (90–220 × 9–17 mm). Of the other *Dracophyllum* species *D. menziesii* is most similar to *D. townsonii* which is a more northerly species (neither species is known to grow together) and from which *D. menziesii* is easily separated by the mostly unbranched stems, the shorter and wider leaves, and by the flowers which are arranged in groups of 3 rather 5-10 on the lower inflorescence branches. In *Dracophyllum menziesii* the stamens and styles are included while those of *D. townsonii* are exserted.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South and Stewart Islands. In the South Island it is found west of a line from Haast to Invercargill.

## HABITAT

Coastal to alpine. Usually in subalpine shrubland, alpine grassland, tussock grassland and herbfield. Also colonising cliffs, bluffs and rock outcrops.

## GENUS

*Dracophyllum*

## FAMILY

Ericaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Dracophyllum menziesii* Hook.f.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

November – February

## FRUITING

January - May

## 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!

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

## ETYMOLOGY

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

## NVS CODE

DRAMEN

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, NS, NStr Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025](#)" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

## 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

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (6 April 2012). Description adapted from Venter (2009)

## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

07 June 2026