Dracophyllum oliveri

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Erect grassy shrub with many erect twigs bearing long very narrow pointed leaves inhabiting the western South Island. Leaves 5-7.5cm long by 1.5-2mm wide, abruptly widening to a sheath that encloses the stem which has a finely hairy margin (lens needed). Flowers in small spike at tip of short branches.



Dracophyllum oliveri, Kepler Track, Fiordland. Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken: 31/05/2020, Licence: CC BY.



Dracophyllum oliveri, Aparima, Takitimu Mountains. Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken: 04/01/2020, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Erect to spreading single–stemmed small tree, 1–4 m tall. Bark on old branches dark grey to dark brown, finely fissured, young stems reddish brown. Leaves dimorphic. Juvenile leaves spirally arranged, spreading to recurved; lamina sheath 6.0–9.0 × 3.0–3.5 mm, yellowish to light green; shoulders rounded to truncate and margin ciliate in upper half; lamina linear–triangular, 75–85 × 1.3–1.5 mm; surfaces glabrous, margins serrulate with 60–80 teeth per 10 mm. Adult leaves crowded at tips of branches, spreading; lamina sheath 3.5–9.0 × 3.0–5.0 mm, membranous; shoulders rounded to auricled, margin ciliate or only the top half ciliate; lamina 30–75 × 0.6–2.0 mm, linear to linear–triangular; margins serrulate with 50–100 teeth per 10 mm; apex triquetrous and acute. Inflorescence a terminal raceme on lateral branchlets, shorter than leaves, erect, drooping later, dense, 17–24 mm long, oblong; inflorescence bract over-topping flowers, 0.6–20.0 × 0.8–1.2 mm, ovate–lanceolate; margins serrulate. Flowers 5–10, pedicellate; flower bract over-topping flowers, 3.0–5.5 × 2.0–3.5 mm, broadly ovate, with a tuft of scabrid hairs at base of adaxial surface; margins ciliate; pedicels straight, 0.3–0.5 mm. Sepals 3.0–6.0 × 1.3–5.5 mm, ovate to triangular, equaling corolla tube, adaxial surface with the top half pubescent; margins ciliate. Corolla white turning light yellow with age; corolla tube 3.0–6.0 × 2.0–2.5 mm, funnelform; corolla lobes spreading horizontally to reflexed, 1.5–2.0 × 1.5–2.0 mm, broadly triangular, shorter than corolla tube; apex inflexed, acute; adaxial surface papillate. Stamens inserted on corolla tube in upper third; filaments 0.5–0.7 mm long; anthers included, 0.6–0.8 mm long, oblong, light yellow. Ovary 1.4–1.5 × 1.3–1.5 mm, ovate, apex round; nectary scales rectangular, 1.0–1.3(–1.5) × 0.6–0.8 mm; apices retuse; style included, 1.3–1.7 mm long, glabrous; stigma five–lobed. Fruit 1.0–1.5 × 1.0–1.3 mm, obovoid, light to dark brown, apex round and glabrous. Seed 0.95–1.2 mm long, filiform, yellowish brown, with a slightly reticulated testa.

SIMILAR TAXA
Dracophyllum oliveri is recognised by the leaves which have 60–80 teeth per 10 mm on the lamina margin; by the clustered 5–10–flowered racemes borne on short lateral branches; by the 5–6 mm long sepals that are longer than the corolla tube and which have light coloured margins. Dracophyllum oliveri is most similar to D. filifolium from which it differs in the leaf, inflorescence and flower characters given above.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (mostly westerly though extending east into Southland in the southern part of its range)

HABITAT
Dracophyllum oliveri is a species of open montane forest, woodland, shrubland or tussock grassland occurring on mountain slopes, gullies, plateaus and swampy depressions within an altitudinal range of 157–1,160 m. In the northern part of its range it is mostly found in dry wooded habitats but in the southern part of its range if virtually confined to bogs.

GENUS
Dracophyllum

FAMILY
Ericaceae

AUTHORITY
Dracophyllum oliveri Du Rietz

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
November – March

FRUITING
January - June

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Minute seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Difficult - should not be removed from the wild

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACW: Facultative Wetland
Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

WHERE TO BUY
Not commercially available.

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

NVS CODE
DRAOLI

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient 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 June 2012). Description adapted from Venter (2009).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/dracophyllum-oliveri/

PDF DATE

08 June 2026