

Fuscospora cliffortioides

COMMON NAME

mountain beech

SYNONYMS

Fagus cliffortioides Hook.f., *Nothofagus solandri* var. *cliffortioides* (Hook.f.) Poole, *Nothofagus cliffortioides* (Hook. f.) Oerst.

FAMILY

Nothofagaceae

AUTHORITY

Fucospora cliffortioides (Hook.f.) Heenan et Smissen

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

NOTCLI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 26

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Very common forest canopy tree in drier upland areas bearing small leathery leaves arranged along the twig and that are pale underneath and with incurved margins. Leaves 10–15 mm long, appearing pointed. Flowers and fruits inconspicuous, but these and new leaf growth can change a tree's colour.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (common from the Central Volcanic Plateau and adjacent main axial ranges), South Island.

HABITAT

Montane forest and subalpine forest and scrub. Often forming a dense, almost monospecific forest especially along the main North Island axial ranges and along the drier, eastern side of the South Island.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).



Mountain beech. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.



Foliage. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.

SIMILAR TAXA

Morphologically very similar to black beech (*Fuscospora solandri*) from which it differs by the ovate leaves with acute to subacute apices, obscure leaf venation and by the glabrous ovary of the flower. Appears to prefer drier conditions than black beech, and has a greater altitudinal range, though it is often sympatric with black beech.

FLOWERING

November–January

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink

FRUITING

February–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed, Cuttings are very difficult to strike. Young plants are very quick growing but do best in cool climates.

WHERE TO BUY

Commonly cultivated in suitable climates. Frequently available from commercial nurseries.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Although many botanists have tended to regard *Fuscospora cliffortioides* as a variety of black beech (*F. solandri*), or even disregard it altogether, recent DNA data combined with phylogenetic mapping of character states confirm the view of Molloy et al. (1999) that *F. cliffortioides* is a distinct species (see Heenan & Smitsen 2013). Nevertheless field recognition is often hampered by the fact that both *F. cliffortioides* and *F. solandri* hybridise, and in some places the hybrids may form complex introgressive hybrid swarms. In these situations it is understandable that field botanists in particular have interpreted 'hybrid swarms' as evidence of a cline between both 'species' resulting in the interpretation of either the one species (*F. solandri*) or two varieties.

KEYSTONE SIGNIFICANCE

Main host for yellow mistletoe (*Alepis flavida*) and red mistletoe (*Peraxilla tetrapetala*).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Heenan PB, Smitsen RD. 2013. Revised circumscription of *Nothofagus* and recognition of the segregate genera *Fuscospora*, *Lophozonia*, and *Trisyngyne* (Nothofagaceae). *Phytotaxa* 146: 1–31.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11646/phytotaxa.146.1.1>.

Molloy BPJ, de Lange PJ, Clarkson BD. 1999. *Coprosma pedicellata* (Rubiaceae), a new species from New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 37(3): 383–397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1999.9512643>.

Skipworth JP. 1981. Mountain beech mortality in the West Ruapehu forests. *Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin* 41: 26–34.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/fuscospora-cliffortioides/>