

Fuscospora cliffortioides

COMMON NAMES

mountain beech

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED 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 trees colour.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink

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.

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 canopy, especially along the main North Island axial ranges and along the drier, eastern side of the South Island.

GENUS

Fuscospora

FAMILY

Nothofagaceae

AUTHORITY

Fuscospora cliffortioides (Hook.f.) Heenan et Smissen

SYNONYMS

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



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



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

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 & Smissen 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.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November–January

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.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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

CULTIVATION

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

ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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

NVS CODE

FUSCLI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 26

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 Not Threatened [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

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/>

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