

Korthalsella clavata

COMMON NAMES

dwarf mistletoe

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Delicate parasite mistletoe, flattened beaded succulent very small (to 8 cm) shrub growing on twigs of another plant. Leaves (flattened stems) 5–10 mm long by 1.5–3.5 mm wide, widest towards tip. Flowers tiny, fruit small, green, on short spike.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Hemiparasitic, succulent, few branches, golden brown, dark olive-green plant parasitising exposed branches and branchlets of host. Haustoria internal, dark green, encircling stele of host. Plants 50–100 mm, erupting from host bark, individual aerial structures lasting from 1–4 years before dehiscing and resprouting. **Branches** few, arising at wide angles, jointed with flattened internodes. **Internodes** thick, narrow-obovate to narrow-spathulate in outline, 5–10 × 1.5–3.5 mm, sub-succulent, rather abruptly narrowed to much-constricted node. **Flowers** borne on upper nodes of branches, growing in whorls on a more narrow spathulate stems 10–15 mm long. **Fruit** 1.5 mm long, ovoid to globular, single seeded, fleshy berries, dispersed by birds or ejected under hydraulic pressure.

SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely confused with *Korthalsella lindsayi*, with which it can be found growing. The structure of both species is similar, the internodes of *K. lindsayi* (compared to *K. clavata*) are wider 5–12 × 3–9 mm (5–10 × 1.5–3.5), with *K. clavata* generally having more smaller bead-like internodes compared to the wider spathulate segments seen in *K. lindsayi*.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Te Ika-a-Māui | **North Island**, from near Whakamaru south to Wairarapa and Turakirae Head; Te Waipounamu | **South Island**, throughout, though notably more common in the east.

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine (0–1500m.a.s.l.), usually found parasitising shrubs within grey scrub communities, also found on shrubs and trees within montane alluvial forest. No clear host preference is as yet evident, though regional patterns may exist (this needs study).

GENUS

Korthalsella

FAMILY

Viscaceae



At Lake Rotoiti, Nelson, December.
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



L. Rotoiti, Nelson. December. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Korthalsella clavata (Kirk) Cheeseman

SYNONYMS

Viscum clavatum Kirk, Korthalsella lindsayi var. clavata (Kirk) Danser

TAXONOMIC NOTES

It has been suggested (Allan, 1961), that this entity may be a hybrid between *K. lindsayi*, and *K. salicornoides*. The general consensus (Rebergen & Sawyer, 2005) is that this species is worthy of species rank.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–March

FRUITING

October–June

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Fleshy berries are dispersed by ballistic projection, attachment and possibly frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult - should not be removed from the wild.

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ETYMOLOGY

korthalsella: After Korthals, botanist

clavata: From the Latin clavatus ‘club-shaped’

NVS CODE

KORCLA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 28

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NR, PF, Sp 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

- Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsidea, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. Pg. 412.
- Rebergen A, Sawyer JWD. 2005. *Korthalsella clavata* in the lower North Island. Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin 49: 11–15.
- Nickrent DL, Malécot V, Vidal-Russell R, Der JP. 2010. A revised classification of Santalales. *Taxon* 59: 538–558. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tax.592019>.
- Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet description prepared for NZPCN by MD Ward (December 21st 2025). Description adapted from Allan (1961) & Rebergen & Sawyer (2005).

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/korthalsella-clavata/>

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