

Melicytus alpinus

COMMON NAMES

porcupine shrub

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Rigid dense small hard shrub with many thick tapering grey speckled branches bearing clusters of small dark green oval leaves. Leaves variable, about 1cm long, widest towards the blunt tip. Flowers inconspicuous, bell-shaped, underneath branches. Fruit white, usually with purple patches.

GENUS

Melicytus

FAMILY

Violaceae

AUTHORITY

Melicytus alpinus (Kirk) Garn.-Jones

SYNONYMS

Hymenanthera dentata var. *alpina* Kirk, *Hymenanthera alpina* (Kirk) W.R.B.Oliv.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

melicytus: From the Greek meli (honey) and kytos (hollow container), referring to the staminal nectaries of the flowers. Literally “honey-cave”

alpinus: From the Latin alpes ‘the Alps’, refers to plants growing in mountainous areas

NVS CODE

MELALP

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36



In cultivation ex Wairarapa. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 27/03/2004, Licence: CC BY.



In cultivation ex Wairarapa. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 27/03/2004, Licence: CC BY.

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.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/melicytus-alpinus/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026