

Montitega dealbata

SYNONYMS

Cyathodes pumila Hook.f.; *Styphelia minuta* Sleumer; *Cyathodes dealbata* R.Br.

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Montitega dealbata (R.Br.) C.M.Weiller

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

MONDEA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 24

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Very low-growing woody cushion to 0.5m wide bearing erect tight-packed small narrow pointy leaves that are dark green with a white underside and producing red fruit inhabiting open upland areas. Leaves 3-5mm long by 1-2mm wide, green strip up middle underneath. Flower white, tubular.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. Australia (Tasmania) and New Zealand (North, South and Stewart Islands).

HABITAT

From sea level to alpine zones on poorly drained ground or peat bogs amongst other cushion-plants, shrubs and grasses. In northern part of its range this species is strictly alpine.

FEATURES

Prostrate, woody shrub forming dense cushion-like patches up to 400mm diameter and 30 mm tall; branches numerous, ascending at tips; branchlets numerous, ascending. Leaves subsessile, close-set, imbricate, erect, coriaceous, glabrous; lamina 3-5 × 1-2 mm, narrow-oblong to narrow-elliptic, minutely apiculate (sometimes not); adaxially glaucous to dark brown-green, abaxially white below except for midribs and margins (these same colour as adaxial leaf surface); margins more or less thickened towards base. Flowers minute, white, hairy, solitary, axillary and/or terminal. Bracts numerous, investing peduncle. Calyx-lobes broad-oblong, obtuse, ciliate. Corolla-tube cylindrical, much > calyx; lobes acute, densely hairy on upper surface. Style minutely 5-lobed. Fruit 4-6 mm diameter, globose, dark red; locules usually 5.



Cyathodes pumila. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Key Summit, Fiordland. Photographer: John Barkla

SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *Pentachondra pumila* which grows in similar places and has a superficially similar growth habit. *Pentachondra pumila* differs from *Montitega* by its adaxially dark purplish-green leaves (abaxially finely striate) which lack mucronate apices, and larger (6-8 mm diameter) bright red to orange pyriform fruits.

FLOWERING

January - March

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

January - April

LIFE CYCLE

Fleshy drupes are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult - should not be removed from the wild

ETYMOLOGY

dealbata: Whitened

TAXONOMIC NOTES

The New Zealand plant was long known as *Cyathodes pumila* Hook.f., though some considered our plant conspecific with the Tasmanian *C. dealbata* R.Br. Albrecht et al. (2010) show that New Zealand and Tasmanian plants are conspecific, and further, that they are misplaced in *Cyathodes*. As such the authors established a new, monotypic genus *Montitega* (*M. dealbata* (R.Br.) C.M.Weiller) for *Cyathodes dealbata*.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (30 December 2010). Description adapted from Allan (1961) and Albrecht et al (2010).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1861: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Wellington, Government Printer.

Albrecht, D.E.; Owens, C.T.; Weiller, C.M.; Quinn, C.J. 2010: Generic concepts in Ericaceae: Styphelioideae - the *Monotoca* group. *Australian Systematic Botany* 23: 320-332.

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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/montitega-dealbata/>