Myoporum aff. insulare

COMMON NAMES
Tasmanian ngaio, boobialla

BIOSTATUS
Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS
Not applicable

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

FLOWER COLOURS
Violet/Purple, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Large shrub or small tree with numerous branches from base, generally with dense bushy habit. **Bark** smooth. **Leaf buds** green and more or less viscid when fresh, often drying black. **Petiole** c. 1 cm long, scarcely distinct from attenuate base of lamina. **Lamina** 4–12 × 1.25–3 cm, elliptic or narrowly elliptic, thick and semi-succulent, finely dotted with pellucid glands, mostly serrulate in the upper half, occasionally entire or, especially in juvenile leaves, more extensively serrulate or serrate; apex mostly acute. **Flowers** 1–few; pedicels c. 5 mm long at anthesis. **Calyx** c. 3 mm long, lobed nearly to base; lobes lanceolate-acuminate. **Carolla** 7–8 mm diameter; lobes > tube, rounded, white with fine purple dots, white-bearded inside towards base. **Style** hairy. **Drupe** c. 6 mm diameter, broad-oblong or broad-ovoid (almos as wide as long), shining deep purple. (Webb et al 1988).

SIMILAR TAXA
Can be distinguished from ngaio (*Myoporum laetum*) by the leaf buds which are light green, not especially resinous, flowers less than 10 mm wide and fruit which are deep purple and almost as wide as long. *Myoporum laetum* has resinous, dark purple or black leaf buds, flowers 10–15 mm wide, and oblong fruit usually mauve to purple or reddish purple, occasionally white.

HABITAT
Terrestrial. Coastal areas, sandy sites behind beaches.
New Zealand plants are male sterile and do not match *M. insulare* s.s. but rather an apparently unnamed species from Victoria. All wild occurrences referred to *M. insulare* appear to be hybrids between this entity and *M. laetum*, with which *M.* aff. *insulare* plants cross readily. The reverse appears to be the case in Victoria, where *M. laetum* has been planted.

GENUS
Myoporum

FAMILY
Scrophulariaceae

AUTHORITY
Myoporum aff. insulare R.Br.

Boobialla. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

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ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April, May, June

YEAR NATURALISED
1978

ORIGIN
Temperate Australia, Lord Howe Island.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
Horticultural. *Myoporum* aff. *insulare* as *M. serrulatum*, based on Royal Horticultural Society of New Zealand records was supposedly introduced as a garden plant to New Zealand in the 1950s. However, it seems that Governor George Grey received plants from Melbourne based botanist Ferdinand von Mueller (these came from East Gippsland) and planted these on Kawau Island in 1870. Flora IV (Webb et al. 1988) records this taxon, as *M. insulare*, as having first naturalised in 1978—this is unlikely; the date of "first" naturalisation was probably much earlier but that record is most likely based on the first genuinely wild occurrence the authors of that flora could find in New Zealand herbaria. The authors of Flora IV quite understandably, had to apply a ruling on what constituted a "first naturalisation" so their system, based on undisputed herbarium specimens of wild plants does not necessarily mean that the date cited was the first time a particular species had started to naturalise.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Perennial.

POISONOUS PLANT
This species, with purple berries, is very poisonous.

ETYMOLOGY
myoporum: Shut pore
insulare: From the Latin insula 'island', pertaining to or growing on islands

NATIONAL PEST PLANT ACCORD SPECIES
This plant is listed in the 2020 National Pest Plant Accord. The National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) is an agreement to prevent the sale and/or distribution of specified pest plants where either formal or casual horticultural trade is the most significant way of spreading the plant in New Zealand. For up to date information and an electronic copy of the 2020 Pest Plant Accord manual (including plant information and images) visit the MPI website.

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)
This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report here.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Webb CJ, Sykes WR, Garnock-Jones PJ. 1988. Flora of New Zealand, Volume IV. Naturalised Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms, Dicotyledons. Botany Division, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Christchurch, NZ. 1365 p.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact Sheet prepared for the NZPCN by: P.J. de Lange (1 February 2006).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myoporum-aff-insulare/

PDF DATE
25 May 2026