

Myrsine australis

COMMON NAMES

red mapou, red matipo, mapau, red maple

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Common tall bushy shrub with bright red twigs bearing wavy yellow-green leaves. Leaves 3-6cm long, with an undulating edge. Flowers small, in clusters. Fruit almost black.

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub or small tree up 6 m tall. Trunk stout, 0.2-0.6 m diam. Bark dark black or purple-black, red on younger branches. Branchlets numerous erect to spreading, very leafy. Petioles stout, fleshy, 5 mm long, often red or green mottled red. Leaves 30-60 x 15-25 mm, dark green to yellow-green variously mottled or blotched with red, or purple spots, leathery, glabrous except for finely pubescent mid vein, obovate-oblong to broad-elliptic, apex obtuse, margins entire, strongly undulate, rarely flat. Inflorescence a fascicle, usually numerous and crowded, produced along branchlets and in leaf axils. Fixed female and inconstant male flowers on different plants, 1.5-2.5 mm diam., white, cream or pale green. Pedicels short, stout, dark red or purple-black. Calyx-lobes 4, sometimes heavily reduced, long persistent. Petals 4, lanceolate, obtuse, free, revolute. Fruit a 1-seeded drupe, 2-3 mm diam., purple-black to black when mature.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from all other New Zealand Myrsine by the small, purple/wine-red blotched or spotted, strongly undulating obovate-oblong to broad-elliptic leaves.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Three Kings, North, South and Stewart Islands.

HABITAT

Common tree of regenerating and mature forest in coastal to montane situations. Often common on northern offshore islands.

GENUS

Myrsine

FAMILY

Primulaceae

AUTHORITY

Myrsine australis (A.Rich.) Allan



Staminate flowers. Remutaka Forest Park.
Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken:
04/03/2010, Licence: CC BY.



Kapiti Island. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe,
Date taken: 01/06/2005, Licence: CC BY.

SYNONYMS

Suttonia australis Richard, *Myrsine urvillei* A.DC., *Rapanea australis* (Richard) W.R.B.Oliv.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

August - January

FRUITING

September - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed. Can be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings but tricky. Best results are obtained using a mist unit.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

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

CULTIVATION

Occasionally cultivated. Easily grown in a wide range of habitats, making an ideal hedge or small specimen tree. Sometimes available from mainline commercial nurseries, and commonly sold by specialist native plant nurseries.

ECOLOGICAL NOTE

One of three known hosts for Adams mistletoe (*Trilepidea adamsii*).

ETYMOLOGY

myrsine: Myrrh

australis: Southern

NVS CODE

MYRAUS

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 46

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland](#)" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

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

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Wellington, Government Printer.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared for NZPCN by: P.J. de Lange 28 October 2009. Description based on Allan (1961)
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New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myrsine-australis/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myrsine-australis/>

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