

# Myrsine umbricola

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, RR, RF

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## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Rare spreading shrub with many wide-angled only slightly weeping twigs bearing small dark spotted oval leaves that are notched at the tip and with a dark blotch at the base inhabiting the Tararua Range. Leaves 11–22 × 7–11 mm, wavy-edged or with a more or less obvious notch.

## FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Green

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dioecious, shrub up 4 × 4–5 m. **Trunks** 1–5, these slender. **Branchlets** horizontal, somewhat spreading, non-divaricating, spreading to upright, usually crowded and leafy. **Adult leaves** 11–22 × 7–11 mm, dark green, glossy, usually with a narrow brown blotch at lamina base, obovate, oblong-obovate, leaf entire apex entire or slightly retuse. **Flowers** axillary, solitary or in fascicles of 2–4. **Female flowers** sparse, often solitary, with 4 sepals and 4 petals; petals free, 1.3–1.6 × 1–1.1 mm, broadly elliptic, light green, cream or flushed maroon at margins; style 0.2 mm, stigma 0.6–0.8 × 0.6–0.8 mm, stamens rudimentary. **Male flowers** solitary or in fascicles of up to 4; petals 4–(5), 2–2.5 × 1.4–1.6 mm, obovate, stamens with anthers 1.1–1.4 × 0.6–1 mm, gynoecium rudimentary. **Fruit** a circular purple or violet drupe 3.4–5.3 × 3.4–5.2 mm.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Myrsine umbricola* differs from *M. aquilonia* de Lange et Heenan and *M. coxii* Cockayne, by its non suckering, smaller stature and broader spread, more slender trunks and horizontal branching pattern, narrower, entire to weakly retuse, very glossy leaves which usually have a narrow brown blotch at the leaf base petiole junction.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. At present known only from the the Tararua Range, in the North Island. However, it was only recognised as distinct in 2003, plants having been previously regarded as shade forms of *M. divaricata* A.Cunn., a species with which *M. umbricola* is widely sympatric. As past literature refers to *M. divaricata* as a widespread species of the Tararua Ranges, it is probable that these records may in part refer to *M. umbricola* as well. *Myrsine umbricola* should also be looked for in similar habitats in the Ruahine Ranges.

## HABITAT

Silver beech (*Lophozonia menziesii* (Hook.f.) Heenan et Smissen) cloud forest from c. 800–1200 m a.s.l. Growing on terracettes, colluvium and around the margins at the bases of rotational slump scars.

## THREATS

Locally abundant but most populations seen to comprise adult plants only. Seedlings are scarce, and those that have been found show clear signs that they are browsed heavily by deer. Because the known populations are small, several are close to or already moribund, recruitment is virtually absent, and at some sites hybrids outnumber pure plants. *Myrsine umbricola* is regarded as seriously threatened. Since its formal description in December 2004, further populations have been found though none are large or free from the same threats.



Foliage of *M. umbricola* at type locality, Mt Holdsworth. Photographer: Peter B. Heenan, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Mature specimen at type locality, Mt Holdsworth. Photographer: Peter B. Heenan, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## GENUS

Myrsine

## FAMILY

Primulaceae

## AUTHORITY

Myrsine umbricola Heenan et de Lange

## SYNONYMS

None

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

August–September

## FRUITING

October–August

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

The propagation requirements of this recent (2003) discovery are as yet unclear. Seedlings transplanted from the wild to assist with the formal description of this species have proved slow to grow but once established have grown very quickly. This species appears to dislike dry conditions. It should be easy to grow from fresh seed.

## ETYMOLOGY

**myrsine:** Myrrh

**umbricola:** Dweller of shady places

## NVS CODE

MYRUMB

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 46

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, RF, RR

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, RF, RR

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: DP, RF, RR

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange PJ, Heenan PB, Norton DA, Rolfe JR, Sawyer JWD. 2010. Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch. 471 p.

Heenan PB, de Lange PJ. 2004. *Myrsine aquilonia* and *M. umbricola* (Myrsinaceae), two new species from New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 42(5): 753–769. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.2004.9512929>.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2009). Description based on Heenan & de Lange (2004) - see also de Lange et al (2010).

### **NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION**

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Myrsine umbricola* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myrsine-umbricola/> (Date website was queried)

### **MORE INFORMATION**

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

### **PDF DATE**

27 May 2026