

Oxalis rubens

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO, SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial herb without bulbils; taproot stout, woody. Stems usually glabrous sometimes covered in sparse antrorse hairs; erect to ascending up to 380 mm long. Leaves all cauline, sometimes subopposite or whorled, 3-foliolate; leaflets sessile, cuneate-obcordate, 2-9 x 2-11 mm, angular, bilobed, purplish-green to subglaucous, more or less glabrous above, sparsely pubescent below, margins ciliate, sinus cut to about half leaflet length, lobes oblong to obovate, straight divergent, apices broad-obtuse, 1.5-7.0 mm apart; petioles c.7-30 mm long, hairs mostly antrorse; stipules usually conspicuous, to 3 mm long, membranous and truncate or apex tapering abruptly to pedicel, ciliate. Inflorescences axillary 1-2-flowered; peduncles longer than leaves, antrorse hairy; pedicels erect. Sepals oblong, 3-4 mm long, often ciliate; petals yellow 7-11 mm long. Capsule cylindric, 13-24 mm long, thickened in middle, usually densely retrorse-hairy. Seeds transversely ribbed.

SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *O. perennans*, which can grow in similar habitats, and from which *O. rubens* differs by its more erect habit, inconspicuous, keeled stipules, and stout, woody taproot. It has a superficial similarity to *O. thompsoniae* which differs by its consistently hairy stems, leaves and capsules, shorter fruits and smooth or only weakly ridged seeds.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand widespread in the North, South and Chatham Islands.

HABITAT

Mostly coastal (sometimes inland on limestone bluffs) where it is especially common on sand dunes and associated sand soils. Plants usually grow up through other supporting vegetation and are often missed except when in flower.

GENUS

Oxalis

FAMILY

Oxalidaceae

AUTHORITY

Oxalis rubens Haw.



Karekare. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 05/11/2008, Licence: CC BY.



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SYNONYMS

In New Zealand this species has been confused with *O. stricta* and *O. perennans*. *Oxalis stricta* is not in New Zealand and *O. perennans* is an uncommon weed.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

A distinctive, potentially undescribed species allied to *Oxalis rubens* occurs sparingly along the eastern South Island within the montane to alpine zone, where it colonises mainly active and semi-mobile scree.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September - March

FRUITING

October - July

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and stem cuttings. Not inclined to be as weedy as *O. exilis*. The purplish-green to subglaucous leaves and large, showy yellow flowers make it particularly attractive. Does best in full sun in a sandy soil. Ideal plant for sand country.

ETYMOLOGY

oxalis: From the Greek word oxus meaning acid or sharp

rubens: Red

NVS CODE

OXARUB

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO, SO

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 Data Deficient | Qualifiers: NR 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

Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. 1988: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. IV. Naturalised Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms, Dicotyledons. Christchurch, New Zealand, Botany Division, D.S.I.R.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 November 2005. Description adapted from Webb et al. (1988). Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/oxalis-rubens/>

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