

Parsonsia praeruptis

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

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

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Procumbent subshrub producing erect, stiff, unbranched, somewhat trailing, leafy stems 0.15–1.4 m long, 3 mm diameter. **Stems** sometimes rooting at nodes, never climbing or twinning, smooth, pale grey-brown.

Internodes 10–50 mm long. **Leaves** yellowish-green, subcoriaceous, prophylls orbicular, 5 x 5 mm, usually present, subsequent leaves larger, variably shaped, oblong or ovate-triangular, not heterophyllous, petiole 1–2 mm long, leaf buttress geniculate below abscission zone, lamina 5–30 x 5–15 mm, leaf base truncate-subcordate, apex obtuse-subacute, usually truncate, mucronate, margin entire. **Inflorescences** axillary or terminal 25-flowered panicles. **Flowers** 5-merous, 4 mm long. **Calyx lobes** 1.5–2 mm, ovate. **Corolla** white, lobes 2–2.2 mm long, spreading, tube 2 mm long, rose-coloured. **Follicles** (fruits) 50–110 x 3–4 mm. **Seeds** 9 x 1.5 mm, coma 12 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Parsonsia capsularis has been found growing sympatrically with *P. praeruptis*. *Parsonia capsularis* is similar but this is a larger climbing, twining vine, whose leaves though remarkably variable are never ovate with truncate bases. The flowers in *P. capsularis* have hairy calyx lobes, and longer peduncles and pedicels. *P. capsularis* as currently circumscribed comprises a number of distinct named varieties, several of which should probably be regarded as full species. Further research is needed.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Te Paki, where it is confined to the 120 ha exposure of ultramafic rocks at Hikurua / de Surville Cliffs and North Cape (Otou) (Heads & de Lange 1999)).

HABITAT

An ultramafic endemic confined to low scrub, talus and boulderfield, and jointed and crevices within the exposed serpentinitic rocks and cliff faces of the Surville Cliffs area. It usually grows with *Coprosma distantia*, *C. neglecta*, *Leucopogon xerampelinus* and *Carex ophiolithica*.



Surville Cliffs, Te Paki. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 19/10/2009, Licence: CC BY.



Surville Cliffs, Te Paki. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 19/10/2009, Licence: CC BY.

THREATS

A naturally uncommon species endemic to the 120-ha exposure of serpentinitised peridotite rock known as the Surville Cliffs Formation. Here *Parsonsia praeruptis* is very common, however, it has been observed that possums selectively browse the fruits and flowers. For this reason, the conservation status of *Parsonsia praeruptis* changed from 'At Risk-Naturally Uncommon' to 'Threatened-Nationally Endangered' in 2013 (de Lange et al. 2013). By 2017, further decline had been observed and the status changed again, to 'Threatened Nationally Critical' (de Lange et al. 2018).

GENUS

Parsonsia

FAMILY

Apocynaceae

AUTHORITY

Parsonsia praeruptis Heads et de Lange

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September–April

FRUITING

October–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Does best in a free-draining, magnesium enriched soil within a pot. Seems to thrive when root-bound, and likes full sun.

CULTIVATION

Not commercially available

ETYMOLOGY

parsonsia: Named after James Parsons, 18th century London physician and botanical author

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 18

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: DP, OL, RF

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: OL, RF

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, OL

2004 | Range Restricted

Jump to current conservation status

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- de Lange PJ, Rolfe JR, Barkla JW, Courtney SP, Champion PD, Perrie LR, Beadel SM, Ford KA, Breitwieser I, Schönberger I, Hindmarsh-Walls R, Heenan PB, Ladley K. 2018. Conservation status of New Zealand indigenous vascular plants, 2017. *New Zealand Threat Classification Series* 22. Department of Conservation, Wellington, NZ. 82 p. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/science-and-technical/nztcs22entire.pdf>.
- de Lange PJ, Rolfe JR, Champion PD, Courtney SP, Heenan PB, Barkla JW, Cameron EK, Norton DA, Hitchmough RA. 2013. Conservation status of New Zealand indigenous vascular plants, 2012. *New Zealand Threat Classification Series* 3. Department of Conservation, Wellington, NZ. 70 p. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/science-and-technical/nztcs3entire.pdf>.
- Heads, MJ, de Lange PJ. 1999. *Parsonsia praeruptis* (Apocynaceae): a new threatened, ultramafic endemic from North Cape, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 37(1): 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1999.9512607>.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (1 August 2005). Description based on Heads & de Lange (1999).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/parsonsia-praeruptis/>

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25 May 2026