

Phormium cookianum subsp. cookianum

COMMON NAME

mountain flax, wharariki

SYNONYMS

Phormium cookianum Le Jol., *Phormium colensoi* Hook.f., *P. forsterianum* nom. nud.

FAMILY

Asphodelaceae

AUTHORITY

Phormium cookianum Le Jol. subsp. *cookianum*

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

NVS CODE

PHOCOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 32$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Scarce in North Island where only known from high alpine situations in the Tararua Ranges, and possible elsewhere within the central axial ranges. Common in the South Island, in subalpine/alpine situations.

HABITAT

Strictly confined to subalpine, alpine situations.



Hollyford Valley, Fiordland. Photographer: John Sawyer



Routeburn, Fiordland. Photographer: John Sawyer

FEATURES

Stout liliaceous herb, 0.6-1(-2) m tall. Leaves numerous, arising from fan-like bases. Individual leaves “paddle-shaped”, erect, stiff, rarely decurved or pendulous 0.6-1(-1.5) x 20-80 mm, glaucous. Lamina margin, entire, somewhat thickened and distinctly pigmented by a dark, rather broad often encircling band 3-5 mm wide. Inflorescence (0.8-)1(-2) m tall, somewhat woody and fleshy when fresh, long persistent, drying charcoal grey or black, with the fibrous interior becoming progressively more exposed. Peduncle 20-30 mm diam., inclined, dark red-green, glabrous. Flowers 25-40 mm long, tubular, dull pink or yellow; tips of inner tepals markedly recurved. Ovary erect. Capsules 100-120 mm long, dark green, trigonous in cross-section, pendulous, tapering toward tip, twisted, initially fleshy becoming papery with age, long persistent. Seeds 8-10 x 4-5 mm, black, elliptic, flat and plate-like, margins frilled or twisted.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from *Phormium tenax* by the pendulous, twisted capsules. Differing from subsp. *hookeri* by the much shorter, broader, erect leaves which have a dark coloured band extending in from the leaf lamina some 3-5 mm, and often encircling the entire leaf blade. Ecologically subsp. *cookianum* seems to be confined to subalpine alpine habitats, where it mainly grows in seepages, along stream sides or on the margins of bogs. Occasionally it is sympatric with subsp. *hookeri*.

FLOWERING

(September-) October-November (-January)

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Yellow

FRUITING

(November-) December (-March)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from fresh seed. Most commonly grown by the division of rooted fans from established plants. Slow to establish and slow growing.

ETYMOLOGY

phormium: Basket or basketwork

cookianum: After Captain Cook

WHERE TO BUY

Uncommon in cultivation.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/phormium-cookianum-subsp-cookianum/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/phormium-cookianum-subsp-cookianum/>