Pseudowintera colorata

COMMON NAMES
red horopito, mountain horopito

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Dark shrub with pepper-tasting leaves blotched red above and coloured white underneath

FLOWER COLOURS
Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Shrub to 3.5 m tall; trunks and branches upright; bark dark; branchlets dark. Plants glabrous. Petiole slender, 5-10 mm long, dark reddish brown. Leaves alternate, pungent and pepper-tasting; midvein inconspicuous above, raised below; lamina 2-6(-8) x 1-3 cm, elliptic, margin undulate, tip obtuse to subacute, coriaceous, upper surface matt green to yellowish-green, blotched with red in exposed situations, undersides glaucous to white and often pink-flushed. Inflorescences axillary, flowers bisexual, c. 1 cm diam., in fascicles of 1-3, on slender pedicels 5-10 mm long, bracts ciliate. Calyx cupule margins subentire to shallowly lobed. Corolla comprised of 5-(6) free petals, these 4-5 mm long, linear to narrow-oblong, greenish yellow, apex obtuse. Carpels 1-5, us. 1-2 maturing, stigma apical. Stamens 5-20. Fruit a 2-3-seeded fleshy globose to subglobose berry, 5-6 mm diam., dark red or black, flesh red. Seed 1- or 3-angled, obovate to elliptic, 2.6-3.6 mm, surface irrregular.



Flowers, South Otago coast. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Port Chalmers. Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken: 01/03/2013, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
Most similar in appearance to P. axillaris which has shining green leaves that are not white underneath and the rare P. insperata of Northland which often has small hairs on the leaf underside and has 13-22 stamens. Neither of these 2 species have leaves that are particularly peppery to taste.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. North, South and Stewart Islands

HABITAT
Coastal, lowland, or montane forest margins and shrubland

THREATS
Not Threatened. Often one of the few shrub species in heavily browsed forests

GENUS
Pseudowintera

FAMILY
Winteraceae

AUTHORITY
Pseudowintera colorata (Raoul) Dandy

SYNONYMS
Drimys colorata Raoul, Drimys axillaris var. colorata (Raoul) Kirk, Wintera colorata Tiegh.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
November-March

FRUITING
December-June

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACU: Facultative Upland
Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
pseudowintera: False Wintera (a related genus)
colorata: Coloured

NVS CODE
PSECOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 86

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 Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: NS 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 HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085
Heenan, P.B, de Lange, P.J. 2006. Pseudowintera insperata (Winteraceae), an overlooked and rare new species from northern New Zealand. NZ J. Botany 44: 89-98;
Eagle, A. 2000. Eagle's complete trees and shrubs of NZ. Te Papa Press, Wellington;
Webb, C.J. & Simpson, M.J.A. 2001. Seeds of NZ gymnosperms and dicotyledons. Manuka Press, Christchurch.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Allan (1961, Heenan and de Lange (2006), Eagle (2000), Webb and Simpson (2001).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pseudowintera-colorata/

PDF DATE

08 June 2026