

# Rubus australis

## COMMON NAMES

tātarāmoa, bush lawyer, swamp lawyer

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Prickly vine with compound, leathery, hairless leaves, leaflets 3-5 leathery, margins serrated, veins, petiolules, petioles and young stems armed in broad-based slender red prickles. Flowers in much-branched panicles, white, cream or pink (individual flowers often widely spaced from each other). Fruits numerous, yellow to orange-red.

## FLOWER COLOURS

White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Much-branched dioecious vine or scrambling vine with stems up to 10 m or more long. Juvenile plants creeping over forest floor, with stems rooting at intervals. Adult vines scrambling up surrounding vegetation. Primary stems of mature vines up to 100 mm diameter, terete, glabrous, unarmed, young branchlets minutely pubescent becoming glabrous with age (juvenile vines often with glabrous stems), otherwise covered in numerous wide-based, otherwise slender, reddish, falcate prickles. Stipules minute, caducous, narrowly deltoid. Leaves of juveniles ternate to quinate, petioles up to 60 mm long; lamina of juvenile leaflets chartaceous, 10-30 × 10-20 mm, ovate to ovate-oblong, acute to obtuse, acutely serrate; borne on petiolules up to 50 mm long; veins distinct (often reddish), glabrate though with sparse fine hairs on main veins of both surfaces and margins; Leaves of adults palmate, ternate to quinate, petioles 20-50 mm long; lamina of adult leaflets coriaceous, 30-50 × 10-35 mm, elliptic to ovate or suborbicular, acute to obtuse, rounded to oblique at base, margins coarsely and often unevenly serrate up to 10x either side, adaxially weakly bullate, glossy, green to dark green, abaxially paler, otherwise weakly bullate or notmore or less glabrous (usually with weak hairs on major veins on both surfaces and margins), veins distinct to indistinct; petiolules minute (rarely up to 20 mm long). Inflorescence a much-branched panicle up to 200 mm long (sometimes a narrow few-flowered raceme), branchlets and pedicels more or less finely pubescent. Flowers white, cream or pinkish. borne distantly on pedicels c.10 mm long. Sepals 2-4 mm long, ovate, obtuse, pubescent; petals 5, 3-6 mm long, ovate to broadly so. Fruits 9 mm diameter, drupelets 8-15 (or more), yellowish to orange-red. Endocarp 'seed' 3.3-4.2 mm long, dorsally ridged 3x.



Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 18/11/2005, Licence: CC BY.



Remutaka Forest Park. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 07/02/2010, Licence: CC BY.

### **SIMILAR TAXA**

Distinguished from introduced *Rubus* (blackberries, raspberries wineberries etc) by the smaller flowers, usually palmate or ternate leaves, and the lack of long glandular bristly hairs on the young stems. From other indigenous *Rubus* (bush lawyers) can be distinguished by the coarsely serrated, elliptic, ovate to suborbicular adult leaves, which bear 10 or fewer teeth on either side of the leaflet, and which are virtually hairless except from fine, sparse hairs on the veins and leaflet margins.

### **DISTRIBUTION**

Endemic. New Zealand. North and South Islands

### **HABITAT**

Coastal to montane. Usually in forest but also found in scrub, and often on the margins of, or within wetlands.

### **GENUS**

*Rubus*

### **FAMILY**

Rosaceae

### **AUTHORITY**

*Rubus australis* G.Forst.

### **ENDEMIC TAXON**

Yes

### **ENDEMIC GENUS**

No

### **ENDEMIC FAMILY**

No

### **FLOWERING**

August - October

### **FRUITING**

December - April

### **PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE**

Easily grown from layered stems and semi-hardwood cuttings. Flourished when planted in damp ground in a well-lighted situation. Not often grown on account of its prickly stems - but nevertheless an attractive plant. The fruits though edible are insipid.

### **WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING**

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

### **ETYMOLOGY**

**rubus:** From the Latin meaning bramble

**australis:** Southern

### **NVS CODE**

RUBAUS

### **CHROMOSOME NUMBER**

2n = 28

## 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 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 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, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I, Wellington, Government Printer.

Webb CJ, Sykes WR, Garnock-Jones PJ 1988: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. IV. Botany Division, DSIR, Christchurch.

Webb, C.J.; Simpson, M.J.A. 2001: Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons. Christchurch, Manuka Press.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (17 October 2016). Description based on Allan (1961), Webb et al. (1988) and Webb & Simpson (2001)

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## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/rubus-australis/>

## PDF DATE

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