

Rubus squarrosus

COMMON NAMES

leafless lawyer, yellow-prickled 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

Extremely prickly usually leafless (or nearly so) scrambling vine. Stems, petioles, petiolules and leaf midribs covered in conspicuous yellow prickles. Leaves usually much-reduced (sometimes absent) compound; leaflets 3-5, lanceolate, deeply toothed. Flowers white, in panicles up to 200 mm long. Fruit red to red-orange.

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, White

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from introduced *Rubus* (blackberries, raspberries, wineberries etc) by the virtually hairless stems and branchlets, much-reduced leaves (so appearing at times leafless) and bright yellow prickles, as well as having smaller flowers and fruits.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North and South Islands, from Ahipara south (scarce north of the Manawatu) and with the exception of Northland mainly easterly.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. Usually in open areas, particularly in dune-field, grey scrub and other shrubland; open forest, river beds, cliff faces, or on talus and boulder slopes.

THREATS

Not Threatened but often local and uncommon over large parts of its potential range. Some northern populations are very vulnerable to habitat destruction

GENUS

Rubus

FAMILY

Rosaceae

AUTHORITY

Rubus squarrosus Fritsch

SYNONYMS

Rubus cissoides var. *pauperatus* Kirk



Kaitorete Spit, Canterbury. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Licence: CC BY-NC.



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 15/11/2014, Licence: CC BY.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October - December

FRUITING

February - March

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from layered stems and semi-hardwood cuttings. An unusual and oddly attractive plant which does well in open, free draining soils, rockeries and also in places where it can grow through surrounding shrubs. Rather resilient it can tolerate some drought and frost. Despite its very prickly stems and leaves it is probably the most commonly grown New Zealand indigenous Rubus. The large yellow prickles and seemingly leafless growth habit are sufficiently unusual that it has proved popular in gardens. If planted in the right sites it is also an excellent deterrent, keeping out unwanted visitors and animals! As with most of the New Zealand native Rubus the fruits of this species though edible are small and insipid.

CULTIVATION

Occasionally available from retail plant and specialist native plant nurseries.

ETYMOLOGY

rubus: From the Latin meaning bramble

NVS CODE

RUBSQU

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 Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT, PF 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 At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, Sp 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 (5 November 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-squarrosus/>

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