Solanum aviculare var. aviculare

COMMON NAMES
poroporo

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: PF, SO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Fleshy shrub to 3 m tall bearing dark green thin narrow leaves that have 1–3 large sharp lobes and large white or pink flowers that have a projecting yellow centre. Leaves 4–40 cm long by 1–1.5 cm wide. Flowers to 4 cm wide. Fruit yellow or orange, 15–25mm long. POISONOUS.

FLOWER COLOURS
Blue, Violet/Purple

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Small, softly woody shrub up to 3 × 2 m. **Branches** sparse to many, suberect to spreading, initially dark green, purple-green to reddish-brown, maturing with fine grey, chartaceous bark. **Leaves** alternate with decurrent, fleshy petioles up to 30 mm long; lamina fleshy-membranous to almost coriaceous, 40–400 × 10–15–(20) mm, dark green, purple-green or rarely yellow-green, narrowly lanceolate to elliptic, entire, or deeply 1–3–(4)-lobed to pinnatifid; lobes/pinnae broadly lanceolate. **Flowers** axillary in 1–3 few to many-flowered cymes. **Calyx lobes** short, broad, spreading. **Corolla** broadly campanulate to rotate, up to 40 mm diameter; tube up to 10 mm long, funnelform, widely flaring at mouth, lobes 10-15 mm, lanceolate; white, lavender, or dark blue , in all cases usually fading to white after anthesis. **Filaments** up to 5 mm long. **Anthers** 3–6 mm long, oblong, spreading, yellow, opening by apical slits. **Berry** 15–25 mm long, broadly ovoid to ellipsoid, maturing yellow or orange, fleshy, pendent; stone cells sparse, inconspicuous. **Seeds** 1.3–2 mm long, dull to semi-glossy, orange-brown, purple-brown or dark purple brown, obovate to cricular or transversely elliptic, often asymmetric, compressed.

Close up iof Solanum aviculare var. aviculare flowers showing acute corolla lobes, Mangaonua Gully, Hamilton. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 09/12/2006, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Pūkaha Mount Bruce. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 27/02/2016, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
Often confused with the much more widespread and common *S. laciniatum* Aiton which has much wider (up to 50 mm diameter) rotate flowers with broader lobes, that are distinctly frilled (ruffled), emarginate lobe apices, large seeds (2–3 mm cf. 1–2 mm) and a different chromosome number (2n = 92 cf 2n = 46). *S. aviculare* var. *aviculare* differs from var. *latifolium* G.T.S.Baylis by its consistently narrower leaves and taller growth habit. Sterile material of either *Solanum* is impossible to determine to species level.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. New Zealand: Kermadec Islands, North Island, South Island (south to about Banks Peninsula and Westland), Chatham Islands. Also Norfolk Island (extinct), Lord Howe Island (extinct), eastern Australia and New Guinea. Naturalised in at least China and Russia, probably elsewhere.

HABITAT
Coastal to lowland (0–400 m a.s.l.). Usually in open shrubland, in and around sea bird nesting grounds, seal haul-outs, or along forest margins. Sometimes an urban weed.

THREATS
It has been observed that *Solanum aviculare* var. *aviculare* is becoming less common in the northern North Island though why is not clear. It was assessed as 'Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable' by de Lange et al. (2018). A full nationwide conservation assessment is needed to clarify its exact status.

GENUS
Solanum

FAMILY
Solanaceae

AUTHORITY
Solanum aviculare G.Forst. var. aviculare

SYNONYMS
Solanum aviculare var. albiflorum Cheeseman, Solanum cheesemanii Herasim., Solanum aviculare f. aviculare nom. nud.

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
Throughout the year

FRUITING
Throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and semi-hardwood cuttings. Tolerant of heavy shade and full sun, and dry or wet soils but not frost. However, as with all poroporo the green fruits are extremely toxic. The white flowered form (known as var. *albiflorum* in some flora treatments) is particularly attractive and worth growing.

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE
The fruits of this species and S. laciniatum Aiton yield important steroid precursors, so both are widely and commercially grown, especially in eastern Europe, Russia and China.

POISONOUS PLANT
As with *Solanum laciniatum*, the yellow or green berries are poisonous but when ripe (orange) they lose much of their toxicity. The symptoms are often delayed up to 6–12 hours and may include a fever, sweating, nausea and abdominal pain. Click on this link for more information about Poisonous native plants.

ETYMOLOGY
solanum: Derivation uncertain - possibly from the Latin word sol, meaning "sun," referring to its status as a plant of the sun. Another possibility is that the root was solare, meaning "to soothe," or solamen, meaning "a comfort," which would refer to the soothing effects of the plant upon ingestion.
aviculare: Small bird

NVS CODE
SOLAVA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 46

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, TO, Sp
2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, Sp, TO
2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, Sp, TO
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, EF, PF, TO 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 Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NR, SO, 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

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ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for the NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 12 May 2006. Description by P.J. de Lange with some elements based on Allan (1961) and Webb et al. (1988).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/solanum-aviculare-var-aviculare/

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