

Solanum aviculare var. aviculare

COMMON NAME

poroporo

SYNONYMS

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

FAMILY

Solanaceae

AUTHORITY

Solanum aviculare G.Forst. var. *aviculare*

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

SOLAVA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 46

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2018 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, Sp, TO

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, Sp, TO

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Fleshy shrub to 3m 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 4-40cm long by 1-1.5cm wide. Flowers to 40cm wide. Fruit yellow or orange, 15-25mm long. POISONOUS.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. Kermadec, North, South and Chatham Islands. In the South Island south to about Banks Peninsula and Westland. Also present on Norfolk (Extinct), Lord Howe (Extinct) and 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.



Close up of *Solanum aviculare* var. *aviculare* flowers showing acute corolla lobes, Mangaonua Gully, Hamilton. Photographer: Peter de Lange



Solanum aviculare var. *aviculare* in flower, Mangaonua Gully, Hamilton. Photographer: Peter de Lange

FEATURES

Small, softly woody shrub up to 3 x 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 x 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 circular or transversely elliptic, often asymmetric, compressed.

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

FLOWERING

Throughout the year

FLOWER COLOURS

Blue, Violet/Purple

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.

THREATS

It has been observed that var. *aviculare* is becoming less common in the northern North Island though why is not clear. A full nationwide conservation assessment is needed to clarify its exact status.

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

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](#).

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).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

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

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Solanum aviculare* var. *aviculare* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/solanum-aviculare-var-aviculare/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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