Sophora longicarinata

COMMON NAMES
limestone kōwhai

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR
Jump to previous conservation statuses

Close up - Sophora longacarinata. Photographer: Simon Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
A small multi-trunked kowhai tree bearing leaves to 140mm long that have equal-sized leaflets 3.3-5.8mm long and with bunches of drooping yellow flowers and dry ridged and knobbly seed pods 70-160mm long containing hard yellow seeds. Juveniles and adults similar. Occurring on limestone in the top of the South Island.

FLOWER COLOURS
Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Shrub or tree lacking juvenile growth habit . Shrub with branches often originating at or below ground level, sometimes with rhizomatous shoots; tree with single and stout main trunk or several smaller stems originating from near or below ground level. **Branchlets** hairy, becoming glabrous with age. **Leaves** up to 140 mm long, imparipinnate , with 35–52 leaflets ; rachis sparsely to densely hairy; immature and developing leaves moderately to densely hairy. **Mature leaflets** 3.3–5.8 × 2 5–3.1 mm, orbicular, obovate, to oblong-obovate, overlapping to distant on rachis; margin glabrous ; apex obtuse to retuse; upper surface dark green, glabrous to sparsely hairy; lower surface light green, sparsely hairy to moderately hairy ; petiolule

SIMILAR TAXA
Distinguished from other New Zealand Sophora species by it's restriction to northern Nelson, western Marlborough, where it grows on mostly marble and limestone rock outcrops; by its normally shrubby growth habit, forming a shrub or small tree usually of similar width and height; by the main branches upright to spreading; by the presence of underground branches and rhizomes; by the usual presence of numerous branches and suckers near the base; by the leaves bearing 35-52 leaflets; and by the leaflets which are 3.3-5.8 × 2.5-3.1 mm, orbicular, obovate, to oblong-obovate, and usually more or less glabrous.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Takaka hill and immediate environs, Arthur Range and western Malrborough)

HABITAT
Lowland to montane. A basicole growing confined to base-rich soils derived from marble and limestone parent materials . It grows on ledges and in crevices on limestone and marble outcrops, among boulders, rock debris, and rubble surrounding these outcrops, in gullies with deeper soils, and on alluvium over-lying marble rock.

THREATS
A naturally uncommon, range restricted species that is sparsely distributed within its mainly marble and limestone rock habitats. Goats are a problem at some locations and a few others have been damaged by plantation forestry but overall this species seems secure.

GENUS
Sophora

FAMILY
Fabaceae

AUTHORITY
Sophora longicarinata G.Simpson et J.S.Thomson

SYNONYMS
Sophora microphylla subp. microphylla var. longicarinata (G.Simpson & J.S.Thomson) Yakovlev; Sophora microphylla var. longicarinata (G.Simpson et J.S.Thomson) Allan

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October – January

FRUITING
December – November

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from seed. Some careful selection is needed, as there are distinct tree and shrub genotypes. Does well in a sunny, well drained soil but often prone to trunk damage from boring beetles.

ETYMOLOGY
sophora: After the Arabic name for a similar tree

NVS CODE
SOPLON

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 18

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon
2004 | Range Restricted
Jump to current conservation status

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Anonymous. 1944. Kowhai. Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin, 9: 4-5
Heenan PB. 1997. Reinstatement of Sophora longicarinata (Fabaceae – Sophoreae) from northern South Island, New Zealand, and typification of S. microphylla. New Zealand Journal of Botany 36: 369–379.

ATTRIBUTION
Description from Heenan et al. (2001).

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/sophora-longicarinata/

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