

Dracophyllum ophioliticum

COMMON NAMES

asbestos Inaka, asbestos turpentine tree

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Sprawling grassy shrub with many branches bearing long narrow pointed leaves towards their tip and inhabiting a small area of the upper Takaka River. Leaves blue-green to brown-green, 21-50mm long, very narrow, base enclosing stem. Flowers small, white, tubular, in small groups at tops of twigs.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub 0.3m-1.0 m tall but reaching 2.0 m in shade, multi-stemmed, decumbent; bark grey and finely fissured. Leaves spreading and crowded at the tips of branches, sheathing at base; sheath glaucous to light green, 4-9 mm x 4-8 mm, coriaceous, striate, shoulder rounded to truncate, margin ciliate; lamina coriaceous, glaucous to light green, linear-triangular, 2-50 x 1.0-2.5 mm, slightly concave, surfaces minutely verrucose and covered in short, white scabrid caducous hairs; margin serrulate, with 10-13 teeth per cm; apex triquetrous. Inflorescence an oblong raceme terminating lateral branchlets, dense, 13-28 mm long with 3-9 flowers; inflorescence bracts persistent, longer than flower, coriaceous, subulate, 13.9-22.2 x 0.7-0.9 mm at base, rugose with serrulate margin; flower bract persistent, shorter than flower, coriaceous, keeled, broadly ovate, 4.5-8.0 x 2.5-4.0 mm, adaxial surface scabrid in distal third, abaxial surface with scabrid hairs; margin white, ciliate; apex acute. Pedicel 1.5-2.0 mm long. Sepals green, ovate-lanceolate, 4-6 x 1.5-3.0 mm, shorter than corolla tube, adaxial surface glabrous with scabrid hairs at apex; abaxial surface with scattered scabrid hairs; margin white, ciliate; apex acute. Corolla white; tube cylindrical with mouth narrowed, 5.5-6.5 x 2.0-2.5 mm, glabrous; lobes reflexed, triangular, shorter than corolla tube, 1.8-2.0 x 1.5-2.0 mm, apex inflexed, subacute, adaxial surface papillate, abaxial surface glabrous. Stamens epipetalous, in upper third of corolla tube, filaments 0.5 mm long; anthers light yellow, oblong, 1 mm long, included. Nectary scales separate, rectangular, 1.0- 1.2 x 0.6-0.7 mm, apex truncate and emarginate to variously toothed, glabrous; ovary obovate, 1.5 x 1.5 mm, glabrous; style enclosed, 1.5 mm long, glabrous; stigma 5-lobed. Capsule pedicellate, light brown, 2.7-4.0 x 2.5-2.7 mm, obovoid, glabrous, enclosed in persistent sepals; style persistent; seed yellowish brown, ovoid, 0.8-1.0 mm long, surface prominently reticulate.



Asbestos. Photographer: Simon Walls, Date taken: 01/12/2004, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Cobb Valley. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 16/03/2016, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA

Similar to *D. filifolium* but differs in being multi-stemmed, stems decumbent, leaves glaucous, minutely verrucose and covered with scabrid hairs when young; flower pedicellate, flower bracts shorter than the flower and keeled, abaxial surface scabrid; sepals shorter than corolla tube, 2-3 mm wide, abaxial surface with scattered scabrid hairs; mouth of corolla tube narrowed and the ovary obovate.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island, restricted to the Cobb and Takaka valleys in Kahurangi National Park, North-West Nelson.

HABITAT

Montane to subalpine (457-1000 m a.s.l.). *Dracophyllum ophioliticum* is restricted to serpentinite rocks with asbestos veins, where it grows in rock crevices, or in greyish to reddish brown clay loam on steep mountain slopes within open ground or amongst *Leptospermum scoparium* shrub/wood.

THREATS

Not Threatened. Listed because it is naturally confined to several small areas of ultramafic rock and soils in North-West Nelson.

GENUS

Dracophyllum

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Dracophyllum ophioliticum S.Venter

SYNONYMS

None (described in 2002)

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

January - March

FRUITING

March - May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Minute seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ETYMOLOGY

dracophyllum: Dragon leaf, from its likeness to the dragon tree of the Canary Islands

NVS CODE

DRAOPH

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Venter, S. 2002: *Dracophyllum marmoricola* and *Dracophyllum ophioliticum* (Ericaceae), two new species from north-west Nelson, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 40: 39-47.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285-309

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (4 January 2004). Description adapted from Venter (2002)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/dracophyllum-ophioliticum/>

PDF DATE

07 June 2026