

Dracophyllum trimorphum

COMMON NAMES

inaka

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Low-growing shrub with many erect twigs bearing untidy tufts of blue-green leaves that become narrower as the plant matures. Adult leaves striped, 12-52mm long by 1-3.5mm wide, with fine hairs at base (lens needed). Flowers white, in short (6-8mm) clusters of 1-4 at top of short side branches.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Multi-stemmed shrub 0.2–3.0 m tall. Bark on old branches grey, finely fissured, young stems yellowish to reddish brown. Leaves dimorphic. Juvenile leaves spirally arranged along branches, spreading, light green to glaucous; lamina sheath 6–10 × 9–11 mm, shoulders tapering and margins ciliate in upper half; lamina 60.0–125.0 × 5.0–7.0 mm, linear-triangular to lanceolate, margin minutely serrulate with 50–70 teeth per 10 mm. Adult leaves spreading, glaucous; lamina sheath 3–7 × 2.2–6.0 mm, striate, shoulders rounded to auricled and margin membranous with the top half ciliate; lamina 12.0–52.0 × 1.0–3.5 mm, subulate to linear-triangular, surfaces scabrid, prominently striated; margin serrulate with 60–100 teeth per 10 mm. Inflorescence a terminal spike on lateral branchlets; shorter than leaves, erect, lax, 5.5–14.0 mm long, oblong; inflorescence bracts overtopping flowers, glaucous, ovate-lanceolate at base, 6.0–18.0 × 0.7–2.0 mm, surfaces widely scabrid; margins serrulate. Flowers hidden by the leaves, 1–4, sessile; flower bracts shorter than flowers, 5.0–7.0 × 0.6–1.5 mm, narrowly ovate, adaxial surface rugose with a basal tuft of scabrid hairs; abaxial surface scabrid and rugose; margins serrulate. Sepals 4.5–6.0 × 1.5–2.0 mm, lanceolate to narrowly ovate, longer than corolla tube, striate, adaxial surfaces glabrous with the top half pubescent; abaxial surfaces pubescent; margins ciliate or ciliate in upper half. Corolla white; corolla tube 3.5–5.0 × 2.4–2.5 mm, cylindrical; corolla lobes spreading, 1.8–2.0 × 1.5–2.0 mm, triangular, shorter than corolla tube, apices inflexed, subacute; glabrous. Stamens inserted in corolla tube in the upper third, filaments 0.3–0.5 mm long; anthers included, 1.2–1.3 mm long, oblong, light yellow. Ovary obovate, 1.3–2.0 × 1.3–1.5 mm, apex pubescent, truncate; nectary scales 1.0–1.5 × 0.5–0.7 mm, rectangular, apices obtuse to retuse; style included, 1.2–2.0 mm long, glabrous; stigma five-lobed. Fruit 1.5–3.0 × 1.5–2.0 mm, obovoid, dark brown; apex truncate, shortly pubescent. Seeds 1.0–1.3 mm long, cream coloured, ovoid, testa slightly reticulate.



Dracophyllum trimorphum. Photographer: Simon Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Dracophyllum trimorphum. Photographer: Simon Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

Dracophyllum trimorphum is readily identified by the three distinct growth stages evident in the shape and size of the leaves. Leaves of the first juvenile stage are large becoming smaller in the middle juvenile stage and ultimately small and narrow in the adult stage. It is also distinguished by the glaucous adult leaves that are prominently striated with the basal part of the lamina covered in dense scabrid hairs, 1–4-flowered and 6–8 mm long inflorescence, with the upper surface of the flower bracts pubescent in the top half, sepals shorter than the corolla tube and the top of the ovary covered in short hairs that sometimes appear papillate when the scabrid hairs are very short.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North West Nelson from Cape Farewell and Port Puponga south to the West Whanganui Inlet

HABITAT

Coastal to lowland on coal measures, on tertiary sandstones and conglomerates (rarely on limestone) in shrubland, often in sites that have been frequently burned in the past.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

THREATS

Not Threatened. Listed because it is a narrow range endemic. This species is abundant within its few known habitats, and most populations occur on secure land.

DETAILED TAXONOMY

GENUS

Dracophyllum

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Dracophyllum trimorphum W.R.B.Oliv.

SYNONYMS

None (described in 1952)

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

October - December

FRUITING

December - May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult - should not be removed from the wild

OTHER INFORMATION

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ETYMOLOGY

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

NVS CODE

DRATRI

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Venter, S. 2009: A taxonomic revision of the genus *Dracophyllum* Labill. (Ericaceae). Unpublished Phd Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington.

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 (3 October 2012). Description adapted from Venter (2009)

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

22 September 2025