

Acrothamnus colensoi

SYNONYMS

Leucopogon colensoi Hook.f., *Leucopogon suaveolens* Hook.f.,
Cyathodes colensoi (Hook.f.) Hook.f.

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Acrothamnus colensoi (Hook.f.) C.J.Quinn

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

ACRCOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 146

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Low-growing sprawling much-branched to weakly branched shrub (branches often subscandent). Leaves spreading, small bronze-green, pinkish green, glaucous to dark red-brown with pale yellow margins, striped white beneath. Leaf margins finely hairy otherwise leaves glabrous. Flowers in small subterminal to terminal racemes, white. Fruit globose, glossy, white, pink, red crimson to almost black, fleshy.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North and South Islands from about Kaingaroa Plain south.

HABITAT

Montane to alpine extending to lower elevations in shrubland, tussock grassland and peat bogs in the southern part of its range



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Cass, Canterbury. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 21/02/2009, Licence: CC BY-NC-SA.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dioecious (?gynodioecious) sprawling, prostrate, glaucescent pinkish green to red-brown shrubs forming much-branched to unevenly, sparingly-branched almost lianoid patches, 0.2-0.5 × 1.0-2.0 m. Branches spreading, ascending to erect, weakly ribbed to ± terete, grey-brown, unevenly pubescent but becoming glabrous with age. Leaves alternate, spreading, glabrous, bronze-green, pinkish green, glaucescent to dark red-brown with pale yellow margins, abaxially distinctly 3-5-nerved but veins not or scarcely raised above surface, veins greenish, interveinal grooves white; lamina 5-10 × 1-4 mm, narrow-oblong, oblong, concavo-convex; margins distinctly thickened, ± recurved, initially finely ciliolate, soon glabrous; apex obtuse, apiculate to mucronulate. Inflorescences near ends of branches, terminal, and/or in upper axils; racemose, 2-5-flowered, terminating in a bud-like rudiment. Flowers subtended by a bract and 2 keeled bracteoles; bract pinkish green to red, up to 2.5 mm long, glaucescent, broadly ovate, obtuse, ciliolate; bracteoles similar but smaller and distinctly keeled. Sepals up to 4 mm long, elliptic-oblong to ovate, obtuse, ciliolate, similar but smaller, imbricate with stomata only on the adaxial surface. Flowers seemingly unisexual, 6-8 mm long; corolla tube 4-5 mm long, hairy toward lobes; corolla-lobes 2.8-3.3 mm long, both surfaces copiously covered in hairs in distal half. Anthers emarginate, 0.4-0.6 mm long, apically attached by a short thin filament inserted near base of corolla tube sinus; the filaments ± exerted to almost hidden within tube, 0.3-0.5 mm long. Ovary 4-5-locular, spheroidal, glabrous, 0.5-1.0 × 0.5-0.8 mm wide; style straight, glabrous, 0.8-1.8 mm long; stigma 0.1 mm long usually immersed in tube, rarely partially exerted. Fruit, white, pink, red, dark crimson (rarely almost black), 4-5 mm diameter, globose. Endocarp 2.5-3.5 × 2.2-3.0 mm, pale brown, brown to orange-brown, broadly obovate, broadly ellipsoid to ovoid, indistinctly, longitudinally ridged 5×, surface somewhat granular.

SIMILAR TAXA

Very superficially similar to *Montitega*, which differs by having narrow-oblong to narrow-elliptic; adaxially glaucous to dark brown-green, abaxially white, leaves whose margins are slightly thickened towards the base, and whose flowers are solitary rather than in racemes.

FLOWERING

September - February

FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

FRUITING

November - June

LIFE CYCLE

Fleshy berries by bird, reptile and invertebrate herbivory (Thorsen et al. 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild.

ETYMOLOGY

colensoi: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

This species has also been treated as *Acrothamnus suaveolens* (Hook.f.) C.J. Quinn (also known as *Leucopogon suaveolens* Hook.f.). However, recent DNA based research backed up with sound morphological characters has recognised that *A. colensoi* is distinct from *A. suaveolens*, which is endemic to Borneo (Quinn et al. 2005).

Acrothamnus colensoi also has a very distinctive chromosome number quite unlike that seen in other New Zealand members of the ericoid Styphelieae (Murray & de Lange 2013).

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for the NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (19 November 2014). Description based on Allan (1961), Quinn et al (2005), Webb & Simpson (2001) and observations made from fresh and dried specimens

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REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/acrothamnus-colensoi/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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