Myrsine australis

COMMON NAMES
red mapou, red matipo, mapau, red maple

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Common tall bushy shrub with bright red twigs bearing wavy yellow-green leaves. Leaves 3-6cm long, with an undulating edge. Flowers small, in clusters. Fruit almost black.

Staminate flowers. Remutaka Forest Park. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 04/03/2010, Licence: CC BY.

Kapiti Island. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 01/06/2005, Licence: CC BY.

FLOWER COLOURS
Cream, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Shrub or small tree up 6 m tall. Trunk stout, 0.2-0.6 m diam. Bark dark black or purple-black, red on younger branches. Branchlets numerous erect to spreading, very leafy. Petioles stout, fleshy, 5 mm long, often red or green mottled red. Leaves 30-60 x 15-25 mm, dark green to yellow-green variously mottled or blotched with red, or purple spots, leathery, glabrous except for finely pubescent mid vein, obovate-oblong to broad-elliptic, apex obtuse, margins entire, strongly undulate, rarely flat. Inflorescence a fascicle, usually numerous and crowded, produced along branchlets and in leaf axils. Fixed female and inconstant male flowers on different plants, 1.5-2.5 mm diam., white, cream or pale green. Pedicels short, stout, dark red or purple-black. Calyx-lobes 4, sometimes heavily reduced, long persistent. Petals 4, lanceolate, obtuse, free, revolute. Fruit a 1-seeded drupe, 2-3 mm diam., purple-black to black when mature.

SIMILAR TAXA
Distinguished from all other New Zealand Myrsine by the small, purple/wine-red blotched or spotted, strongly undulating obovate-oblong to broad-elliptic leaves.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. Three Kings, North, South and Stewart Islands.

HABITAT
Common tree of regenerating and mature forest in coastal to montane situations. Often common on northern offshore islands.

GENUS
Myrsine

FAMILY
Primulaceae

AUTHORITY
Myrsine australis (A.Rich.) Kirk

SYNONYMS
Suttonia australis Richard, Myrsine urvillei A.DC., Rapanea australis (Richard) W.R.B.Oliv., Myrsine australis (A.Rich.) Allan (isonym)

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
August - January

FRUITING
September - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easy from fresh seed. Can be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings but tricky. Best results are obtained using a mist unit.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACU: Facultative Upland
Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION
Occasionally cultivated. Easily grown in a wide range of habitats, making an ideal hedge or small specimen tree. Sometimes available from mainline commercial nurseries, and commonly sold by specialist native plant nurseries.

ECOLOGICAL NOTE
One of three known hosts for Adams mistletoe (*Trilepidea adamsii*).

ETYMOLOGY
myrsine: Myrrh
australis: Southern

NVS CODE
MYRAUS

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 46

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.
Northland: 2026 | Regionally Not Threatened Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau" Ford et al. 2026 report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared for NZPCN by: P.J. de Lange 28 October 2009. Description based on Allan (1961)
Some of this factsheet information is derived from Flora of New Zealand Online and is used under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence.

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myrsine-australis/

PDF DATE

24 August 2026