

Clematis foetida

COMMON NAMES

clematis

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Strongly sweet-scented liane with greenish-yellow flowers and 3 heart-shaped leaflets per leaf (juveniles with 9 leaflets per leaf). The species name is a misnomer, in that the flowers are sweetly perfumed, not 'foetid'.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Evergreen woody climber with main stems to 6 m or more tall; trunk to 6 cm diam. at base; branchlets grooved, densely fulvous tomentose when young. Leaves 3-foliolate (9 leaflets in juvenile plants), opposite; petioles c. 1.5-5(-9) cm long, stout, pilose-pubescent. Leaflets pubescent-pilose with fulvous hairs especially beneath, eventually becoming glabrate; on petiolules c. 5-10 mm long; midvein and secondary veins visible above, more obvious below; leaflet lamina (2.3-)5.5-9 x (1.8-)4.5-8(-12) cm, ovate, entire to sinuate, rarely crenately serrate or lobed, subcoriaceous, dark green, tip acute to obtuse, base truncate to subcordate, undersides paler. Subfloral leaves smaller. Juvenile leaves larger, thinner, irregularly lobed and sometimes serrate. Inflorescences unisexual, conspicuous, in axillary dichasial cymes, few-flowered, up to 8 cm long, inflorescence bracts ovate, acute to acuminate, paired, united, inserted above middle of peduncle. Flowers strongly scented. Male to 2.5 cm diam., sepals (5-)6(-8), ovate-oblong, obtuse to subacute, imbricate, glabrous above, hairy beneath, 6-12(-23) x 2-5(-7) mm, yellow; stamens many, anthers 0.8-1.5 mm long, filaments glabrous., up to 1 cm long. Female 5-8 sepals, imbricate, yellow, glabrous above, pilose beneath, ovate, obtuse, 6-11 x 3-5 mm; staminodes few. Achenes hairy, elliptic, narrowed to apex, compressed, margin thickened and distinct, surface unornamented, (2.0-)2.2-3.0(-3.3) mm long, styles 15-28 cm long at fruiting, white-plumose for most of length, short hairs at base.

SIMILAR TAXA

Similar to other climbing yellow-or green-flowered clematis species that have large leaves. It can be distinguished most easily from *C. cunninghamii* by the weaker smell of that species (and also by the downy rather than hairy sepals and petals). From *C. forsteri* it can be distinguished by its young growing stems clad in yellow-brown hairs (glabrous in *C. forsteri*). *C. forsteri* has young leaves that are either glabrous underneath, or occ. with white (rather than brownish) hairs (the anthers are also larger in this species). The bipinnate juvenile leaves result in 9 leaflets per leaf in *C. foetida* whereas even seedling leaves of *C. forsteri* have 3 leaflets.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Island. All except Taranaki in north, Nelson, Marlborough, Canterbury and eastern Otago in south.



Clematis foetida. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



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HABITAT

lowland forests and especially forest margins.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Ranunculaceae

AUTHORITY

Clematis foetida Raoul

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

September-November

FRUITING

November-January

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Pappate achenes are dispersed by wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

OTHER INFORMATION

ETYMOLOGY

clematis: From the Greek klema 'vine', alluding to the vine-like habit of many species

foetida: Stinking

NVS CODE

CLEFOE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 16

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2024 | Regionally Not Threatened

REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Government Printer, Wellington.

Eagle, A. 2000: Eagle's complete trees and shrubs of NZ. Te Papa Press, 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.

Webb, C.J; Sykes, W.R; Garnock-Jones, P.J. 1988: *Flora of NZ, Volume IV*. DSIR, Christchurch.

Webb, C.J. & Simpson, M.J.A. 2001: Seeds of NZ gymnosperms and dicotyledons. Manuka Press, Christchurch.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from: Allan (1961), Webb et al. (1988), Eagle (2000), Webb and Simpson (2001); also members' field experiences.

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/clematis-foetida/>

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