Coprosma ciliata

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Bushy shrub with wide-angled branches bearing very small pairs of leaves that have small hairs along the leaf margin and also underneath. Twigs covered in small hairs at tip. Leaves thin, longer than wide, with 1 or 2 pits on underside. Fruit orange.

FLOWER COLOURS
Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Variable, erect or spreading or sometimes sub-prostrate shrub up to approximately 3 m tall. Branches slender, branchlets pubescent. Leaves on petioles (1-) 2-3 (-4) mm long, hairy. Stipules subacute, pubescent, densely ciliate, with conspicuous tuft at apex. Lamina thin, pubescent, broad-ovate to oval to oblong, acute to obtuse, (6-) 10 (-20) x (1.5-) 4-5 (-10) mm. Midrib (pilose above and below) and principal secondary veins usually evident on both surfaces. Flowers solitary, axillary. Male flower without calyx; corolla funnelform, lobes ovate-triangular, acute, equal to tube. Female flower with acute, short, triangular calyx-teeth; corolla subcampanulate, cut 1/2 way into acute lobes. Drupe white or yellow or orange or pink or purplish-red, globose to oblong, approximately 6-7 mm diameter.

SIMILAR TAXA
Although certainly a distinct species, some forms of *Coprosma* are infuriatingly difficult to distinguish from some forms of C. ciliata.
Coprosma dumosa has smaller fruit, 4-5 mm diameter, and usually watery white or yellow or pink or orange or red. If pigmented, the colour is all in the skin; the flesh of the fruit is clear and watery (whereas in *C. ciliata* the flesh as well as the skin is usually coloured). *C. dumosa* has more leathery leaves which tend to be widest toward the tip, which is generally more rounded, and blunt (*C. ciliata* leaves are widest about the middle and thinner and tend to taper to a pointed apex). *C. dumosa* is less hairy than most forms of *C. ciliata*.
Coprosma rubra has flattened leaf stalks, a small denticle at the tip of most stipules, and yellowish white oblong fruit 4-6 mm long.
Coprosma parviflora has violet fruit and lack a prominent tuft of hairs on the stipule.
Coprosma crassifolia shaded leaves can have hair-fringed margins as in *C. ciliata* and *C. rubra*, but the very pale under-surface of the leaf contrasting with the dark green leathery upper surface is distinctive; so is the smooth, red-brown, rather glossy bark on older branches and trunks.

Homer tunnel, December. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Homer tunnel, December. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DISTRIBUTION
North, South, Stewart, Auckland, Campbell and Antipodes Islands. From the Tararua Range southwards.

HABITAT
Lowland to higher montane, 0-900 m, forest and grassland, apparently almost throughout, but local except in southern portion of range.

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

DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY
Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY
Coprosma ciliata Hook.f.

SYNONYMS
Coprosma myrtillifolia Hook. f.

TAXONOMIC NOTES
In Allan (1961), Oliver, in the course of his discussion, which should be consulted, says: "Hooker described from the Auckland Islands under the name of *C. myrtillifolia* specimens having smaller leaves wanting hairs on the margin. Besides a portion of the type the Dominion Museum contains a good series of specimens of *C. ciliata* which I collected at the Auckland, Campbell, and Antipodes islands in 1927. These show variations from large ciliate leaves to small glabrous ones, both often being found on the same branches. *C. myrtillifolia* corresponds with the form with small glabrous leaves, which I judge to be characteristic of the more exposed positions."

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING
October-November (-January)

FRUITING
February-May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Fleshy drupes are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

OTHER INFORMATION

ETYMOLOGY
coprosma: From the Greek kopros 'dung' and osme 'smell', referring to the foul smell of the species, literally 'dung smell'
ciliata: From the Latin cilia 'eyelash', meaning fringed with hairs

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY
Key to Coprosma species of New Zealand

NVS CODE
COPCIL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 88

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. Vol. 1. Wellington: Government Printer. pg. 570-571.
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.
Wilson, H. D., & Galloway, T. 1993. Small-leaved shrubs of New Zealand. Manuka Press. pg. 92-93.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted by M. Ward from Allan (1961) and Wilson & Galloway (1993).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/coprosma-ciliata/

PDF DATE

11 March 2025