

Coprosma repens

COMMON NAMES

taupata, looking glass plant, mirror plant

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Common low-growing shrub or small tree bearing pairs of green very shiny dark green leaves inhabiting the edge of coastal forests and seaside rocks. Leaves 6-8cm long, leathery, with small pits at junction of veins. Fruit orange.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dioecious (rarely monoecious) shrub or small tree up to 8 m tall, prostrate and widely spreading in exposed sites, shrub to arborescent in more sheltered situations; **branches** firm and more or less pliant when young becoming more brittle with age, **bark** dark to light brown, underbark green; **branchlets** initially pubescent with short patent hairs, becoming glabrous with age. **Leaves** on fleshy glabrous, slender to stout petioles 8-16 mm long. **Stipule** shortly sheathing, margin finely pubescent, otherwise outer surface pubescent, inner more or less glabrous, broad-deltoid, subacute to subtruncate; denticles up to 4 either side of a single large, dark black apical denticle, conspicuous, central one prominent. **Lamina** thick, subfleshy, coriaceous, 5-90 × 4-60 mm, dark glossy green above, paler and dull below; broad-oblong, elliptic-oblong, broadly ovate-oblong to suborbicular, rounded to truncate, usually apiculate (slightly emarginate to retuse on Three Kings and northern Hauraki Gulf Islands), apiculus caducous, cuneately narrowed to base; margins plane to slightly recurved (very occasionally inrolled). Vein reticulations evident above and especially below. **Flowers** in compound clusters on branched peduncles. Male flowers 3-20 per cluster; calyx-teeth minute; corolla funnelform, lobes 4-5, acute, about = tube. Female flowers usually 3 per cluster; calyx-teeth short, obtuse; corolla subfunnelform, c.5 mm long, lobes acute or obtuse, < tube; stigmas stout (Perfect flowers occasional (though with pollen often aborted or malformed) through out range but especially common on the northern offshore islands). **Drupe** orange-red, red (rarely yellow), obovoid often slightly compressed, 8-12 × 8-10 mm

SIMILAR TAXA

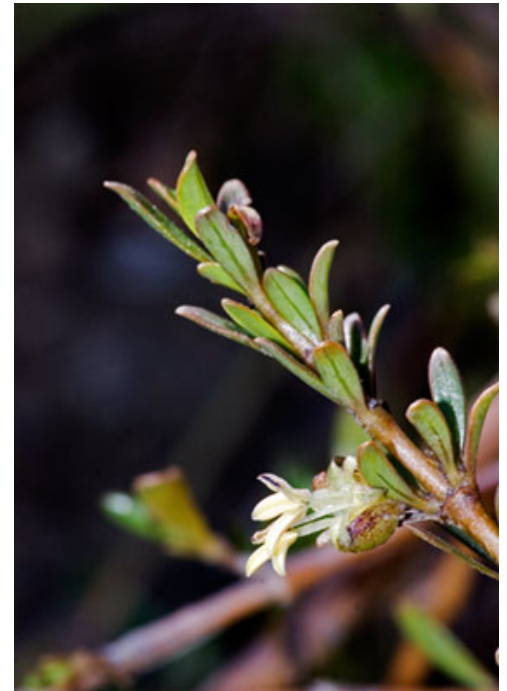
A distinctive species easily recognised by the very glossy, dark green, broadly oblong to suborbicular (round) leaves. It is only likely to be confused with *C. baueri* (a Norfolk Island endemic extremely rarely cultivated in New Zealand) and *C. petiolata* (a Kermadec endemic rarely cultivated in New Zealand). For distinctions between it and *C. petiolata* see *C. petiolata*.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Three Kings, North and South Islands as far south as Greymouth in the west and Rarangi in the east but now extensively naturalised throughout the South Island, Stewart and Chatham Islands. Also naturalised on Norfolk Island and in Hawaii, in Australia, California and South Africa.



Eastbourne. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 08/06/2001, Licence: CC BY.



Coprosma repens x C. acerosa ("C. x kirkii"). Paekakariki. Oct 2006. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Licence: CC BY.

HABITAT

Coastal (rarely inland: Kaitaia – Awanui River, Huntly Basin and in the Manawatu – especially the upper Rangitikei River). A common species of rock stacks, islets, islands coastal cliffs, talus slopes and boulder field. Also a common component of petrel scrub on northern offshore islands, and in coastal forest where it often forms the main understorey and rarely is co-dominant in the canopy. Frequently associated with other coastal *Coprosma*, especially *C. crassifolia*, *C. macrocarpa* subsp. *macrocarpa* and subsp. *minor*, *C. rhamnoides*, *C. neglecta*, and members of the *C. acerosa* complex. Hybrids between *C. repens* and *C. acerosa* are common and are known as *C. xkirkii*, less frequently hybrids between it and *C. crassifolia* are found (*C. xbuchananii*) and with both *C. rhamnoides* and *C. neglecta*.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma repens A.Rich.

SYNONYMS

C. retusa Hook.f.; *C. baueriana* Hook.f.; *C. baueri* auct. non Endl.; *C. stockii* Williams, Choice, Stove et Greenh.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

June - February

FRUITING

July - June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed, semi-hardwood cuttings and layered pieces. Moderately frost-tender. An attractive species which is inclined to self-sow and times become weedy in cultivation. In some places of New Zealand where it is not natural it has become established from garden plantings and it now poses a threat to other indigenous *Coprosma* populations as well as local coastal vegetation associations.

OTHER INFORMATION

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED NOTES

A serious weed in many countries, e.g., Australia, Norfolk Island, South Africa, U.S.A. (California), Hawaii. Hybrids between this species and the Norfolk Island endemic *C. baueri* are now frequent on that island, and could possibly be responsible for its ultimate extinction from that island group.

ETYMOLOGY

coprosma: From the Greek kopros 'dung' and osme 'smell', referring to the foul smell of the species, literally 'dung smell'

repens: From Latin repere meaning to creep, means creeping

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to Coprosma species of New Zealand

NVS CODE

COPREP

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

Dawson, J.W. 1961. Coprosma. The Spike (or Victoria University College Review). Victoria University of Wellington Student's Association.

Gordon, H.D. 1959. Sex ratio in *Coprosma repens* (rubiaceae). Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin, 31: 11

ATTRIBUTION

Description based on Allan (1961) though supplemented with additional measurements and observations taken from herbarium specimens and wild plants.

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/coprosma-repens/>

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22 March 2025