

Coprosma robusta

COMMON NAMES

karamū, glossy karamū

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Large bushy shrub with pairs of glossy leaves which have a small dark-tipped flap on the stem between the leaf bases. Leaves 7–12cm long, with a prominent ridge up the middle underneath and a furrow up the middle above. Fruit red, in tight clusters along twigs.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub or small tree up to 6 m tall. Branches numerous, stout, erect to somewhat spreading. Petioles stout, 10–20 mm long. Stipules fused towards base, obtuse, glabrous with one of two prominent, black, glandular denticles. Leaves 70–120 × 30–40–50 mm, leathery, dark green above, paler green beneath, glabrous, elliptic, elliptic-oblong to broad-ovate, acute or obtuse, apex mucronate. Venation reticulated, conspicuous. Male flowers in axillary many-flowered glomerules, corolla conspicuous, lobes triangular, acute, stamens 4–5, prominent. Females in compound clusters on peduncles 10–15 mm. Calyx and corolla much reduced, stigmas prominent. Drupe dark orange (rarely yellow), 8–8 × 4–5 mm, oblong to narrow-ovoid.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from all the other lowland, large-leaved *Coprosma* spp., by the seemingly entire leaves, which are finely toothed along the margins—this can be felt by dragging a finger tips along the leaf edge. Perhaps closest to *Coprosma macrocarpa* subsp. *minor*, with which it freely hybridizes, and from which the more simple leaf venation (not so reticulate), finely toothed leaf margins are useful distinctions.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands south to Banks Peninsula. Naturalised populations occur in Otago and Southland (typically around planting sites) and also Rekohu/Chatham Islands within a small area between Waitangi and Owenga.

HABITAT

Common throughout coastal, lowland and lower montane habitats within shrublands and open sites within forest.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

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DETAILED TAXONOMY



Pistillate flowers. Boulder Hill, western Hutt hills, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 13/11/2004, Licence: CC BY.



Pistillate flowers. Boulder Hill, western Hutt hills, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 13/11/2004, Licence: CC BY.

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma robusta Raoul

SYNONYMS

?Coprosma coffaeoides Colenso

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

(July-) August-September (-November)

FRUITING

(March-) April-May (-July)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from fresh seed. Also easy from semi-hardwood cuttings. Fast growing and inclined to become weedy.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

OTHER INFORMATION

CULTIVATION

Not commonly cultivated but often naturalising from urban indigenous vegetation restoration sites (sometimes where it has been planted erroneously beyond its natural range). Fruit are dispersed by birds. Heavily fruiting females (which are often apomictic) can be very spectacular. Known to hybridise with other Coprosma species such as *C. macrocarpa* subsp. *minor* and *C. propinqua*.

ETYMOLOGY

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

robusta: Sturdy

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to Coprosma species of New Zealand](#)

NVS CODE

COPROB

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 HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by Peter J. de Lange (30 August 2004). Description adapted from Allan (1961).

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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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