

# Coprosma tenuicaulis

## COMMON NAMES

swamp coprosma, hukihuki

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Erect bushy shrub with long thin twigs bearing pairs of thin rounded leaves on short flattened leaf stalks inhabiting wetland sites. Leaves mottled, 8-13mm long. Small tuft of longer hairs on hairy stem between leaf bases (sometimes a small dark tooth also present). Skin of fruit dark reddish-black to black, flesh dark purple.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub up to c.3 m tall; branches slender, filiramulate, subdivaricate, usually interlacing; branchlets slender, pubescent. Leaves on more or less winged, slender, pubescent petioles 3-5 mm long. Stipules small, triangular, subacute, more or less pubescent, ciliate, terminal tuft conspicuous. Lamina subcoriaceous, glabrous, orbicular-ovate, spatulate, obtuse, minutely apiculate, more or less 8-13 × 8-10 mm. Reticulations of veins evident on both surfaces. Male flowers in fascicles of 3-6; calyx 0; corolla funnelform, lobes more or less = tube, ovate, acute. Female flower solitary or in axillary clusters of 2-4 along short branchlets; calyx-teeth minute; corolla funnelform, lobes ovate, acute, = or > tube. Drupe black, globose, 3-4 mm diameter.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Easily recognised by the filiramulate, subdivaricating growth habit, and leaves which have darker margins and a lighter pigmented central blotch on the upper leaf surface. It is perhaps most likely to be confused with *Coprosma virescens* which has a superficially similar leaf shape but differs by its preference for better drained soils, greenish trunk, smaller leaves (5-9 x 3-6 mm cf. 8-13 x 9-10 mm in *C. tenuicaulis*), glabrous to glabrescent rather than pubescent branchlets, and yellowish-white, oblong rather than dark reddish-black to black, globose drupes

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands from Kaitaia to about Okarito

## HABITAT

Lowland (rarely montane) in swamps and boggy ground, poorly drained shrubland and riparian forest.

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## DETAILED TAXONOMY

## FAMILY

Rubiaceae



Kennedy bay, March. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



At Kennedy bay, March. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## AUTHORITY

*Coprosma tenuicaulis* Hook.f.

## SYNONYMS

*Coprosma tenuicaulis* var. *major* Cheeseman

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## ECOLOGY

## FLOWERING

July - October

## FRUITING

March - May

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Fleshy drupes are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and semi-hardwood cuttings. An attractive shrub to small tree that does well in dappled light. Although it flourishes in swamps it is easily grown in poorly draining or free draining soils, in full sun or partial shade.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

## OTHER INFORMATION

## ETYMOLOGY

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

**tenuicaulis**: Thin stalk

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## NVS CODE

COPTEC

## 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.

Cheeseman, T.F. 1885. Description of three new species of Coprosma. Transactions of the Royal Society, 18: 315-317

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

## ATTRIBUTION

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

## MORE INFORMATION

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

## PDF DATE

11 March 2025