

Dracophyllum scoparium

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Grassy bright green shrub with many erect twigs bearing clusters of narrow pointed straight leaves are covered on the margin and upper surface with many very small inhabiting Chatham and Campbell Islands. Leaves 30–50 × 0.5–1 mm. Flowers white, in clusters of 3–6 at tip of twigs.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect multi-stemmed shrub to small tree, 1–4(–5) m tall. **Bark** on old branches dark brown to blackish brown, finely fissured, young stems reddish brown. **Leaves** erect to spreading; lamina sheath 2.0–5.0 × 1.5–4.0 mm, shoulders tapering to truncate and margins membranous and ciliate; lamina 24.0–80.0 × 0.3–1.5 mm, linear to linear-subulate, adaxial surface pubescent, slightly striated; margins ciliate to densely pubescent with 100–120 teeth per 10 mm; apex triquetrous. Inflorescence a terminal spike on lateral branches; shorter than leaves, erect, dense, 13–20 mm long, oblong; inflorescence bract over-topping flower, 1.8–2.0 × 0.9–1.0 mm, ovate-lanceolate at base, adaxial surface glabrous, pubescent at apex; abaxial surface pubescent at base; margins ciliate. **Flowers** 3–6, sessile; bracts over-topping flowers, 5.0–9.5 × 2.5–4.0 mm, broadly ovate, adaxial surfaces pubescent; margins ciliate. **Sepals** 2.5–5.0 × 1.5–3.5 mm, oblong, equaling to longer than corolla tube, striate, surfaces glabrous with the top half pubescent; margins ciliate; apices acute to acuminate. **Corolla** white (rarely pink or cream); corolla tube 3.0–3.5 × 1.3–1.5 mm, cylindrical; corolla lobes reflexed, 1.7–2.5 × 1.2–2.0 mm, triangular, shorter than corolla tube, apex inflexed and acute; adaxial surface papillate. **Stamens** inserted on corolla tube in the upper third, filaments 0.3–0.5 mm long; anthers included, rectangular, light yellow and 0.9–1.0 mm long. **Ovary** 0.8–1.0 × 0.9–1.0 mm, obovate, apex round; nectary scales 0.6–0.7 × 0.5–0.6 mm, rectangular, apices subacute to obtuse; style included, 0.95–1.0 mm long, glabrous, not lengthening in fruit; stigma five-lobed. **Fruit** 1.8–2.0 × 2.1–2.5 mm, obovoid, light brown, apex round, glabrous. **Seeds** 0.7–0.8 mm long ovoid, light brown, testa slightly reticulate.



Ocean Mail, Chatham Island. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 02/06/2013, Licence: CC BY.



Tarahinau karupuru (*Dracophyllum scoparium*) sapling showing juvenile foliage. Lake Rotoeka, Rakautahi, Rekohu | Wharekauri | Chatham Island. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 03/12/2023, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA

On the Chatham Islands *Dracophyllum scoparium* can only be confused with *D. arboreum*, especially when *D. arboreum* grows on the margins of the restiad bogs that *D. scoparium* favours. From *D. arboreum*, *D. scoparium* differs by its smaller shrub - tree growth habit (up to 5 m cf. 15 m tall), smaller bronze-green to red-green, juvenile foliage, the fact that juvenile plants often flower, the lack of reversion shoots on adult shrubs, and by the upper leaf surface which is tomentose rather than pubescent. *Dracophyllum scoparium* is confined to restiad bogs where it forms shrubs or small trees up to 5 m high. In disturbed habitats it frequently hybridises with *D. arboreum*. On Campbell Island *D. scoparium* grows with *D. cockayneanum* which differs by its much longer yellow-green leaves. With respect to the other New Zealand *Dracophyllum*, *D. scoparium* is morphologically similar to *D. filifolium*, from which it differs in having smaller leaves (30.0–50.0 × 0.6–1.0 mm compared to 60.0–130.0 × 1.0–1.5 mm), lamina pubescence on the adaxial surfaces (not glabrous). The inflorescence bract is subulate with pubescent abaxial surfaces and the adaxial surface of the flower bract is pubescent not glabrous. The sepals are striate and longer than the corolla tube (not equaling and smooth) with the top half pubescent not glabrous. The corolla tube is narrower (1.3–1.5 mm compared to 1.8–2.5 mm) with longer (2.0–2.5 mm compared to 1.5–2.0 mm) triangular corolla lobes having papillate not glabrous adaxial surfaces, smaller nectary scales and an obovate not subglobose ovary.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Chatham Island (Rēkohu) and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku. *Dracophyllum scoparium* has been reported from Pitt Island (Rangiauria) (Venter 2021) but there is no suitable habitat there and there do not seem to be substantiating herbarium specimens. Only tarahinau (*Dracophyllum arboreum*) seems to grow there, and it is possible that past records of *D. scoparium* from Rangiauria may stem from confusing young shrubs of tarahinau with that species.

HABITAT

The dominant woody shrub of Chatham Island (Rēkohu) restiad bogs and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku vegetation—where it has a wider range.

THREATS

Abundant within its known habitats, and hardly at risk. Often regenerates profusely following fire on Chatham Island (Rēkohu).

GENUS

Dracophyllum

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Dracophyllum scoparium Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

D. scoparium var. *paludosum* (Cockayne) Cockayne, *Dracophyllum paludosum* Cockayne; *Dracophyllum urvilleanum* var. *scoparium* Hook.f.; *Dracophyllum subantarcticum* Cockayne nom. nud.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Throughout the year

FRUITING

Throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult - should not be removed from the wild

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

dracophyllum: Dragon leaf, from its likeness to the dragon tree of the Canary Islands

scoparium: Like a broom

NVS CODE

DRASCO

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 26

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Venter S. 2021. A taxonomic revision of the Australasian genera *Dracophyllum* and *Richea* (Richeeae: Styphelioideae: Ericaceae). *Australian Systematic Botany* 34: 1–205. <https://doi.org/10.1071/SB19049>.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (8 June 2012). Description adapted from Venter (2021)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/dracophyllum-scoparium/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026