

Coprosma distantia

SYNONYMS

Coprosma obconica subsp. *distantia* de Lange et R.O.Gardner. Also known by the tag names *C. sp.(s)* in Eagle (1982)

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma distantia (de Lange et R.O.Gardner) de Lange

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

COPDST

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 44$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL, RF

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, OL

2004 | Range Restricted

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Rare bushy low-growing sprawling small-leaved wide-angled shrub inhabiting the northern tip of the North Island. Juvenile leaves mottled brown, adult leaves in sunny parts of plant to 12mm long, those in shaded parts to 20mm long, oval, glossy, margins curved, underside pale, tip with a small sharp point. Fruit yellowish.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Known only from the 120 ha exposure of serpentinite rock, at the Surville Cliffs, North Cape Scientific Reserve.

HABITAT

Restricted to ultramafic (serpentinite) rock, where it grows on cliff faces, boulderfields, talus slopes, and on the dark red clay soils which develop on this rock type. It does not like competition from taller shrubs and grasses, so mainly grows in exposed habitats.



Stipule. In cultivation ex Hikurua / de Surville Cliffs. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 20/07/2007, Licence: CC BY.



Hikurua / de Surville Cliffs. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 26/02/2011, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Prostrate densely matted divaricating shrubs, 0.1-0.2 x 2-5 m, branches long-trailing. Bark of mature twigs dark silver-grey to almost black, corky, inner bark dark green. Adult leaves of two types. Those in exposed conditions broadly elliptic to oblanceolate, 3.5-12 x 1.5-2.5(-3.5) mm, dark green to almost orange-green, those in the shade up to 20 x 4.5 mm. Both types broadly elliptic to oblanceolate. Male and female plants on separate plants. Drupes (fruits) uniformly cream to pale lemon when fresh. Pyrenes (Seeds) 3.1-4.1(-4.4) x 2.0-2.5 mm, oblong-elliptic or elliptic, pale orange-yellow to light orange-yellow. For a full description see de Lange & Gardner (2002, New Zealand Journal of Botany 40(1): 25-38) where this species is treated as *C. obconica* subsp. *distantia*.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

SIMILAR TAXA

Coprosma obconica differs by its suberect to erect shrub habit, greenish-white or translucent white, fruits variously striped or blotched dark violet-purple, much smaller, clogg-shaped, prominently "notched" pyrenes (seeds). *C. obconica* rarely grows on ultramafic rock (only two instances, involving two plants known). Both species are vegetatively distinguished from New Zealand *Coprosma* species by their leaf tips, which possess a nipple-like "bull nose" apical leaf prolongation.

FLOWERING

April to October

FRUITING

January to November

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Moderately easy from semi-hardwood or hardwood cuttings. Seed should germinate easily. Plants are very slow-growing (even slower than *C. obconica* s.s.).

THREATS

No serious active threats are present. The species is very common on the ultramafic (serpentinite) rock. However although viable seed is frequently seen, seedlings remain as yet unknown. All of the Surville Cliffs ultramafic flora is placed at some level of risk due to the slow spread of pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*), needle bush (*Hakea sericea*), and downy hakea (*Hakea gibbosa*), fire, and from browsing animals.

ETYMOLOGY

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

WHERE TO BUY

Coprosma distantia is grown by a few specialist nurseries, and several botanic gardens. Plants are very slow growing. All cultivated material seems to be from a female clone bought into cultivation by the late A.P. (Tony) Druce from material he collected in 1979 the Surville Cliffs. This clone, unlike *C. obconica* s.s., freely forms sterile fruits, and occasionally hybrid fruit where it is grown in the vicinity of other *Coprosma* species.

ATTRIBUTION

Description based on de Lange and Gardner (2002)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange, P.J.; Gardner, R.O. 2002: A taxonomic reappraisal of *Coprosma obconica* Kirk (Rubiaceae: Anthospermeae). New Zealand Journal of Botany 40(1): 25-38.

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

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Coprosma distantia* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/coprosma-distantia/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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