Coprosma waima

SYNONYMS
None

FAMILY
Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY
Coprosma waima A.P.Druce

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE
COPWAI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 44

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RR
2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: CD, DP, RR
2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

Mount Hauturu. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Male flowers (June) in cultivation. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Shrub with pairs of large leathery leaves directly attached to the stem inhabiting upland Waima forest in Northland. Leaves 5-18cm long (depending on shading), with a prominent pale central vein on the upper surface. Small pale tooth on pale stem between leaf bases. Fruit orange, clustered on short stalks.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. North Island, Waima Forest.

HABITAT
A species of cloud forest which now primarily occurs on cliff faces. It is suspected that this habitat is probably not entirely natural; as the species is rather palatable and so the cliffs are probably acting as a refugia from goats and other browsing animals which frequent this species only known habitats.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Upright, sparingly branched dioecious shrub 1-2(-3) m tall. Stem internodes 10-20-100(-150) mm. Leaves subsessile. Petioles 0.5-1 mm long. Leaves 50 x 30 mm in the open, 180 x 70 mm in shade, dark green to yellow green, glossy, oblong to narrowly ovate-oblong, subcoriaceous to coriaceous, apex mucronate, deflexed forming a conspicuous “drip tip”. Leaf base cordate, with each lobe often extending sufficient to almost clasp the adjacent lobe. Domatia of the pit type, present in axils of main veins, but sparingly so in shade leaves. Internode stipules up to 7 mm long, stipular sheath thin, 1 mm long; apex, upper surface and marginal parts of under surface with glandular denticles, these numerous. Inflorescences lateral in 3-4 opposite pairs towards tips of main leafy stem, multi-branched. Flowers (3-)10-25(-30), aggregated into 1-4 clusters with 3-9(-13) flowers per cluster.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to Coprosma species of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

None. The distinctive, large, opposite, shortly petiolate (appearing almost sessile), ovate-oblong leaves and cordate to almost completely amplexicaul leaf bases are unique to this species.

FLOWERING

April to August

FRUITING

October to March but some fruit may be present throughout the year

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from semi-hardwood cuttings. Fresh seed germinates easily. In cultivation this species readily hybridizes with C. robusta Raoul, and C. grandifolia Hook.f. Hybrids with C. parviflora Hook.f. have also been reported, and it seems likely that given the opportunity this species will cross with any Coprosma species. This species does best in a semi-shaded, cool and/or damp site, and it should be planted in a free draining, humus enriched soil. Plants are prone to sudden collapse during periods of dry or humid weather.

THREATS

Threatened by browsing animals such as goats, cattle, horses and possums. Since its discovery in 1986 many browsing animals have been eliminated from the area, but goats and especially possums remain a threat. One unexpected consequence of animal control has been the spectacular regeneration of Coprosma grandifolia which now grows admixed with C. waima. Because of this hybrids are now commonly seen between both species, and there are concerns that hybrids could threaten the long term viability of C. waima. Based on recent field surveys it is clear that very few mature specimens of C. waima remain in the wild, and most are found on the steep cliff faces on the southern side of Hauturu. It may move into a higher category of threat.

ETYMOLOGY

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

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally sold in garden centres. Most plants sold are female, and these rarely set fruit in isolation. Hybrids are freely produced wherever other male Coprosma species are present. A small percentage of fruits formed by female plants are derived through apomixis.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet Prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 30 November 2005. Description modified from Druce (1989)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Druce, A.P. 1989. *Coprosma waima* (Rubiaceae) - a new species from northern New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany 27*: 119-128

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

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/coprosma-waima/