

Dracophyllum kirkii

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Dracophyllum kirkii Bergg.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

DRAKIR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 26

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Low-growing sprawling shrub bearing erect tufts of blue-green narrow tapering leaves inhabiting West Coast mountains. Leaves 42-60mm x 4-5mm at widest point. Flowers tubular, mixed in leaves at base of leaf tufts. Fruit a dry capsule.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (southern Nelson southwards to West Canterbury and North Westland)

HABITAT

Dracophyllum kirkii is a species of subalpine shrubland, tussock grassland, fell field and herbfield on gentle to moderately steep mountain slopes, ridgelines as well as on bluffs and boulderfalls



Birch Hill Stream, Mt Cook, February.
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Birch Hill Stream, Mt Cook, February.
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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Decumbent to spreading multi-stemmed shrub, 0.2–1.4 m tall. Bark on old branches grey to dark grey, smooth or finely fissured, young stems reddish brown. Leaves dimorphic; juvenile leaves: spirally arranged along branches, spreading, glaucous; lamina sheath 9.3–7.5 × 5.4–8.0 mm, coriaceous, tapering and margin ciliate in upper half; lamina coriaceous, 42.0–60.0 × 4.0–4.7 mm, linear-triangular, surfaces glabrous; margins serrulate with 80–90 teeth per 10 mm; adult leaves spreading, glaucous to occasionally light green; lamina sheath 4.0–10.0 × 3.5–9.0 mm, subcoriaceous, striate, shoulders tapering to auricled and margin membranous, smooth to ciliate in the top half; adult lamina linear-triangular, 16.0–70.0 × 1.5–4.0 mm, prominently striated; margins serrulate with 90–110 teeth per 10 mm. Inflorescence a solitary sessile and erect flower near apices of branches; shorter than leaves; inflorescence bract over-topping flower, glaucous, 8.0–20.0 × 2.0–2.6 mm, ovate, surfaces glabrous, margins ciliate. Sepals 6.5–7.0 × 2–3 mm, ovate, shorter than to equaling corolla tube; margins ciliate. Corolla white; corolla tube 5.0–6.0 × 2.0–2.5 mm, cylindrical; corolla lobes reflexed, 1.8–2.0 × 1.0–1.5 mm, ovate-triangular to triangular, shorter than corolla tube, apices acute to subacute; apical ridge present, adaxial surface papillate. Stamens inserted on corolla tube in upper third, filaments 0.4–0.6 mm long; anthers included, oblong, light yellow and 0.8–1.2 mm long. Ovary cylindrical to ovate, 1.8–2.0 × 1.5–2.0 mm, glabrous, apex round; nectary scales rectangular, 1.0–1.5 × 0.7–0.9 mm, apices retuse; style included, 0.7–2.0 mm long, glabrous; stigma capitate. Fruit light brown, 2.7–3.0 × 2.3–2.5 mm, broadly obovoid, apex round, glabrous. Seeds light brown, ovoid, 0.95–1.0 mm long, testa slightly reticulate.

SIMILAR TAXA

Dracophyllum kirkii is easily recognised by its sprawling habit with the branchlets erect at the tips; smooth, dark grey bark with shallow fissures; glaucous leaves, with the lamina 20–40 × 2–4 mm, and the lamina sheath not much wider than lamina and the lamina base scabrous; flowers solitary; corolla tube 5 mm long and shorter to equaling the sepals. *Dracophyllum kirkii* seems most closely allied to *D. pubescens*, which differs in having pubescent leaves and 3–5-flowered racemes. Although *Dracophyllum kirkii* resembles *D. pubescens* in having glaucous leaves, these are always glabrous not pubescent and the inflorescence is always a solitary flower.

FLOWERING

October – April

FRUITING

Throughout the year

LIFE CYCLE

Minute seeds are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult - should not be removed from the wild

ETYMOLOGY

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

kirkii: After Thomas Kirk (18 January 1828 - 8 March 1898), a NZ botanist and lecturer in natural sciences and regarded as a leader of botanical enquiry in NZ for over three decades. One of his most significant publications was *Forest flora of NZ* (1889) but he also contributed over 130 papers to the *Transactions and Proceedings of the NZ Institute* and other journals.

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (6 June 2012). Description adapted from Venter (2009)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Venter, S. 2009: A taxonomic revision of the genus *Dracophyllum* Labill. (Ericaceae). Unpublished Phd Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington.

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/dracophyllum-kirkii/>