

# Dracophyllum menziesii

## FAMILY

Ericaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Dracophyllum menziesii* Hook.f.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## NVS CODE

DRAMEN

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Low-growing reddish shrub with multiple branches topped by a tuft of wide grass-like leaves inhabiting the southwest of the South Island. Leaves tough, 90-220mm long by 9-17mm wide, margin rough to touch. Flowers tubular, in crowded spikes underneath the leaves.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South and Stewart Islands. In the South Island it is found west of a line from Haast to Invercargill.

## HABITAT

Coastal to alpine. Usually in subalpine shrubland, alpine grassland, tussock grassland and herbfield. Also colonising cliffs, bluffs and rock outcrops.



Homer tunnel, Gertrude valley, January.  
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence:  
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Homer tunnel, Gertrude valley, January.  
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## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect stemmed, sparingly branched shrubs 0.5–1.0 m tall. Bark on old branches grey, smooth, rarely deeply fissured at base, young stems brown. Leaves crowded at tips of branches in a bromelioid manner; lamina sheath light brown, 10.0–20 × 7.0–20.4 mm, coriaceous, striate; tapering, margins membranous and smooth; lamina coriaceous, linear–triangular to occasionally triangular, 90–220 × 9–17 mm, surfaces glabrous, prominently striated; margins cartilaginous, serrate, thickened, with 20–32 teeth per 10 mm; apex thickened, acute. Inflorescence an axillary panicle situated below the leaves; shorter than the leaves, drooping, dense, 50–150 mm long, oblong and sparsely branched; rachis and pedicels pubescent; inflorescence axis mid green to reddish brown, 1.5–2.4 mm in diameter; basal inflorescence branch 11.0–12.4 mm long, widely spreading; inflorescence bracts caducous, over-topping the flowers, dark green to red, broadly ovate at base, 12.0–19.2 × 6.0–8.8 mm, adaxial surfaces glabrous to sericeous in basal half; abaxial surfaces glabrous, margins ciliate. Flowers 8–38, in groups of three at base of inflorescence, pedicellate; bracteoles caducous, recaulescent, with one bracteole situated just below the perianth and the other in the middle of the pedicel, shorter than flower, 4–5 × 0.8–1.0 mm, glabrous; pedicels straight, 1.5–5.5 mm long, tomentose. Sepals ovate to broadly ovate, 2.5–3.5 × 1.5–2.5 mm, shorter than the corolla tube, striate, surfaces glabrous; margins ciliate. Corolla white to red; corolla tube campanulate, widened at mouth, 4–7 × 3–5 mm; corolla lobes reflexed, ovate–triangular, shorter than corolla tube, 2.0–4.5 × 1.1–1.6 mm, apices obtuse; surfaces glabrous. Stamens inserted at top of corolla tube, filaments 0.5–1.2 mm long; anthers included, oblong, light yellow and 1.3–1.5 mm long. Ovary obovate, 1.3–1.5 × 1.7–2.0, glabrous, apex round; nectary scales rectangular, 0.7–0.8 long and wide, apices retuse; style included, 2.5–3.5 mm long, glabrous, lengthening in fruit; stigma five-lobed. Fruit reddish brown, 1.5–2.5 × 2.5–5.0 mm, depressed–globose, apex round, glabrous. Seeds dark brown, ovoid, 0.55–1.3 mm long, testa slightly reticulate.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Dracophyllum menziesii* is recognised by its shrubby habit, mostly unbranched (and if so then sparingly) growth habit; leaves which are crowded in a bromelioid fashion, and which are short and broad lamina (90–220 × 9–17 mm). Of the other *Dracophyllum* species *D. menziesii* is most similar to *D. townsonii* which is a more northerly species (neither species is known to grow together) and from which *D. menziesii* is easily separated by the mostly unbranched stems, the shorter and wider leaves, and by the flowers which are arranged in groups of 3 rather 5–10 on the lower inflorescence branches. In *Dracophyllum menziesii* the stamens and styles are included while those of *D. townsonii* are exserted.

## FLOWERING

November – February

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

## FRUITING

January – May

## LIFE CYCLE

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Should not be removed from the wild. Don't be tempted - take photographs instead!

## ETYMOLOGY

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

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (6 April 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

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Dracophyllum menziesii* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/dracophyllum-menziesii/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

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