

Dracophyllum politum

SYNONYMS

Dracophyllum rosmarinifolium var. *politum* Cheeseman

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Dracophyllum politum (Cheeseman) Cockayne

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

DRAPOL

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Low-growing tight-packed hard cushion or sprawling small shrub with very small narrow glossy leaves covering the twigs inhabiting some mountain areas of the South Island. Leaves to 12mm long, pressed close to twig. Flowers small white, solitary at tip of hidden branches, but can cover surface of cushion.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South (North-west Nelson (Mount Goul), North Westland (Denniston area) Fiordland National Park, Otago (Mount Maungatua)) and Stewart Islands

HABITAT

Montane to alpine in fully exposed sites on gentle mountain slopes, especially on mountain summits and plateaus. A sparse to locally common component of subalpine to alpine shrubland, herbfield, fell field, grassland or bog.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).



Dracophyllum politum in flower, Stewart Island.
Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken:
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Dracophyllum politum habit, Stewart Island.
Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken:
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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Cushion-forming, up to 0.5 m tall and 1 m in diameter, or a scrambler 0.02–0.5 m tall. Branches spreading to prostrate, much-branched. Bark on old stems grey to brown, broadly fissured, young stems reddish brown. Leaves imbricate, appressed to stem, erect, olive to dark green, dry old leaves present. Leaf sheath 2.5–4.0 × 3.0–4.0 mm, shoulders tapering to round and margin membranous, ciliate. Lamina rigid and hard, 3.5–17.2 × 0.7–1.5 mm, linear, adaxial surface flat; surfaces glossy, margins serrulate with 90–100 teeth per 10 mm; apex obtuse or occasionally subacute. Inflorescence a sessile, solitary terminal flower; shorter than leaves, erect. Flower bract shorter than flower, foliose, 2.0–3.0 × 0.7–0.8 mm, broadly ovate to triangular, margins serrulate, apices obtuse. Sepals 4.8–5.0 × 1.8–2.0 mm, ovate–lanceolate, longer than corolla tube, adaxial surface with top half pubescent; abaxial surface glabrous; margins ciliate. Corolla white; corolla tube 3.5–4.5 × 1.4–1.5 mm cylindrical, widened at mouth; corolla lobes spreading horizontally to reflexed, 1.5–2.2 × 1.0–1.8 mm, ovate–triangular, shorter than corolla tube, apical ridge present, inflexed at apex, obtuse; adaxial surface papillate. Stamens inserted on corolla tube in upper third, filaments 0.5–1.0 mm long; anthers included, 0.9–1.0 mm long, oblong, light yellow. Ovary 1.2–1.8 × 1.2–1.3 mm, ovate, apex round; nectary scales 0.8–1.2 × 0.5–0.7 mm, rectangular, apices irregularly toothed; style included, 1.0–1.1 mm long, glabrous, not lengthening in fruit; stigma five-lobed. Fruit 2.5–3.0 × 1.5–2.5 mm, dark brown, oblong and ridged at the ribs; apex round, glabrous. Seeds 0.68–0.7 mm long, dark brown, ovoid, testa prominently reticulate.

SIMILAR TAXA

Dracophyllum politum is a distinctive, dense cushion-forming plant or a prostrate shrublet with densely imbricated leaves appressed to the branch. The leaves are very glossy, convex, slightly curved inwards and with obtuse apices. The flowers are solitary and the flower bracts have blunt apices. The corolla lobes are distinctively inflexed and have a prominent apical ridges.

FLOWERING

December - March

FRUITING

February - May

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

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (16 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

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

MORE INFORMATION

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