

Dracophyllum prostratum

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Dracophyllum prostratum Kirk

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

DRAPRS

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Very low-growing sprawling grey-green or green woody shrub with many very small narrow leaves covering the twigs inhabiting mountain areas of the southern South Island. Leaves 3-5mm long, gradually tapering to a broad base that clasps the stem. Flowers small, longer than leaves, white, solitary, at end of twigs.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: south Island (south of Arthur's Pass)

HABITAT

Dracophyllum prostratum is a common species of subalpine to alpine habits where it grows in subalpine shrubland, alpine herbfield, fellfield, tussockland, bogs, cushion field or short grassland developed over alpine flushes.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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



Key Summit, December. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Eglinton Valley, Fiordland. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Decumbent, prostrate trailing or cushion-forming shrublet 10–100 mm tall. Branches prostrate. Bark on old branches dark grey to blackish brown, smooth, young stems reddish brown. Leaves spirally arranged along branches, erect to appressed to the stem, glaucous to light green, old leaves present; lamina sheath 1.5–3.0 × 2.0–3.0 mm, shoulders tapering to rounded and margin membranous, ciliate; lamina 2.5–7.3 × 0.5–1.0 mm, linear to linear-triangular, adaxial surface flat to slightly concave, abaxial surface keeled; margins serrulate with 10–40 teeth per 10 mm (only at the apex); apex obtuse to acute. Inflorescence a sessile, solitary terminal flower; longer than leaves, erect. Inflorescence bract shorter than flower, 3.6–3.8 × 1.8–2.0 mm, ovate-lanceolate; margin serrulate; apex obtuse. Sepals 3.5–4.5 × 1.5–2.0 mm, lanceolate, shorter than corolla tube; margin ciliate. Corolla white; corolla tube 3.0–4.5 × 2.0–2.5 mm; cylindrical, corolla lobes 1.5–2.0 × 1.5–2.0 mm, reflexed, ovate-triangular, shorter than corolla tube, apex obtuse; inflexed for entire length, apical ridge present, adaxial surface papillate. Stamens inserted on corolla tube in the upper third, filament 0.2–0.3 mm long; anthers included, oblong, light yellow and 1.0–1.2 mm long. Ovary obovate, 1.0–1.5 × 0.8–1.0 mm, apex round; nectary scales 0.5–0.8 × 0.4–0.5 mm, rectangular, apices retuse to irregularly toothed; style included, 0.9–1.0 mm long, glabrous; stigma capitate. Fruit reddish brown, 1.5–2.0 × 1.4–1.5 mm; obovoid, apex truncate, glabrous. Seeds 0.45–0.7 mm long, light brown, ovoid, testa weakly reticulate.

SIMILAR TAXA

Dracophyllum prostratum is easily recognised by its prostrate growth habit; dark brown and smooth bark; erect, clasping leaves (1.5–3.0 × 2–3 mm) with shortly ciliate sheaths, and by the solitary flowers with the sepals equal to or longer than the corolla tube. Of those other decumbent *Dracophyllum* species it is most similar to *D. muscoides* from which it differs by its distinctly prostrate growth habit, smooth bark, and leaves which have more teeth per 10 mm (10–40 cf. 5–10) and by the flowers which are diagnostically longer than the leaves. The sepals of *D. prostratum* are also shorter than the corolla tube (never equaling it) while the apex is acute rather than subacute to obtuse. The corolla lobes of *D. prostratum* are longer (1.5–2.0 cf. 1.0–1.5 mm) and have papillate adaxial rather than glabrous surfaces. The ovary of *D. prostratum* is obovate rather than ovate and narrower (0.8–1.0 cf. 1.4–1.5 mm) while the fruits are longer and wider.

FLOWERING

December – February

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

February – May

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

prostratum: Prostrate

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (4 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,

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

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

MORE INFORMATION

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