

# Dracophyllum septentrionale

## COMMON NAME

Ruahine grass tree

## FAMILY

Ericaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Dracophyllum longifolium* (W.R.B.Oliv.) S.Venter

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## NVS CODE

DRALVS

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR

2009 | Data Deficient

2004 | Not Threatened

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Erect grassy shrub with light grey bark and many erect twigs bearing long very narrow pointed leaves inhabiting the southern North Island. Leaves 8-13cm long by 1-2.5mm wide, abruptly widening to a sheath that encloses the stem which has a finely hairy margin (lens needed), outer leaf surface rough.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (southern Ruahine Ranges on and close to Mt Maharahara, and north-eastern Wairarapa Taipo). Venter (2009) ambiguously (i.e. he does not cite specimens) records *Dracophyllum longifolium* var. *septentrionale* from the upper Whanganui River, and from the "Flagstaff Mountains". On the basis of herbarium specimens it is also known from the north-eastern Wairarapa Taipo. Further survey, especially within the Ruahine Ranges would be useful.

## HABITAT

*Dracophyllum longifolium* var. *septentrionale* prefers dense montane shrubland on ridge lines, summit crests and on cliff faces. It sometimes extends in forest where it grows in clearings



Maharahara, Ruahine Forest Park. Jun 2009.  
Photographer: Leon R. Perrie, Licence: All rights reserved.



Maharahara, Ruahine Forest Park. Jun 2009.  
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## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A multi-stemmed shrub or small tree, 1–2 m tall. Bark on old branches dark grey to greyish brown, smooth or finely fissured, young stems reddish brown. Leaves adult and juvenile. Juvenile leaves spirally arranged along branches, spreading; lamina sheath yellowish green, 11.0–16.0 × 6.0–7.6 mm, shoulders truncate and margin ciliate in upper half; lamina linear to linear-triangular, surfaces glabrous, 110–200 × 4–6 mm, margins serrulate with 50–60 teeth per 10 mm; adult leaves erect to spreading; lamina sheath 7.0–12.0 × 2.8–5.0 mm, striate, rounded to truncate and margin membranous with the top half ciliate; lamina linear to linear-triangular, 46.0–130.0 × 1.0–2.5 mm; adaxial surface rugose; margins serrulate with 50–60 teeth per 10 mm. Inflorescence a raceme near the apices of branches; shorter than leaves, erect, dense, 12–24 mm long, oblong; inflorescence bracts over-topping flowers, ovate-lanceolate, 28–37 × 0.6–0.7 mm, adaxial surfaces scabrid; margins serrulate, apices acuminate. Flowers 3–11, pedicellate; flower bracts caducous, over-topping flowers, coriaceous, 5.0–7.5 × 2.0–3.0 mm, broadly ovate, adaxial surfaces sericeous; margins ciliate; apices acute; pedicels straight, 0.6–1.5 mm long, glabrous. Sepals 3.5–5.0 × 1.3–2.0 mm, ovate-lanceolate, equaling corolla tube, adaxial surface pubescent in the top half; margins ciliate. Corolla white; corolla tube 3.5–4.0 × 1.5–2.0 mm, cylindrical; corolla lobes reflexed, 1.5–1.7 × 1.0–1.2 mm, ovate-triangular, shorter than corolla tube, apex subacute; surfaces glabrous. Stamens inserted onto corolla tube near the top, filaments 0.6–1.0 mm long; anthers included, 0.9–1.0 mm long, oblong, light yellow. Ovary 2.9–3.0 × 1.8–2.0 mm, obovate, apex round; nectary scales 1.5–1.6 × 0.7–0.8 mm, rectangular, apices retuse; style included, 1.3–1.5 mm long, glabrous; stigma five-lobed. Fruit pedicellate, 2.0–3.0 × 2.0–3.5 mm, obovoid, light brown, apex round, glabrous. Seeds 0.7–1.3 mm long, ovoid, cream coloured, testa slightly reticulate.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Allan (1961) included this plant within a broad circumscription of *D. longifolium* sens. lat. While Oliver (1952), considered it close to *D. filifolium*, noting that the racemes were very similar to that species but that the foliage was much wider. Venter (2009) notes that it is distinguished from all other *Dracophyllum* by the long and wide juvenile (110–200 × 4–6 mm) and adult (80.0–125.0 × 1.5–2.5 mm) leaves, rugose adaxial surface of the adult lamina, caducous flower bracts over-topping the flower with sericeous adaxial surfaces, short pedicels, sepals equaling the corolla tube and pubescent in the top half of the adaxial surface, stamens inserted onto the corolla tube near the top and the cream coloured ovoid seeds.

## FLOWERING

November – February

## FLOWER COLOURS

White

## FRUITING

January - May

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult - should not be removed from the wild

## THREATS

Venter (pers. comm. 2001) has suggested that deer browse was severely inhibiting regeneration and may be killing mature trees but recent field work (Perrie & Shepherd 2009) did not see this. Perrie & Shepherd (2009) noted that *Dracophyllum septentrionale* was reasonably common at its type locality (Mt Maharahara, Ruahine Range), and that there this plant had a “good” population structure and was regenerating freely.

## 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 13 June 2012. Description adapted from Venter (2009).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Wellington, Government Printer.

Oliver, W.R.B. 1952. A revision of the genus *Dracophyllum*: (Supplement). Transactions of the Royal Society of New Zealand. 80: 1–17.

Perrie, L.; Shepherd, L. 2009: *Dracophyllum longifolium* var. *septentrionale* photographed on Mt Maharahara. *Trilepidea* 68: 3

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

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

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

## MORE INFORMATION

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