

Dracophyllum sinclairii

COMMON NAME

gumland grass tree

SYNONYMS

Dracophyllum squarrosum Hook. f.; *Dracophyllum adamsii* Petrie;
Dracophyllum viride W.R.B. Oliv.

FAMILY

Ericaceae

AUTHORITY

Dracophyllum sinclairii Cheeseman

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

DRASIN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 26

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Shrub with untidy tufts of grass-like slightly striped leaves inhabiting the northern North Island. Adult leaves 37-95mm long by 2-3mm wide, leaves of juveniles longer. Flowers white, in clusters of 4-9 at the end of short side branches clustered at the base of the central tuft.

HABITAT

Dracophyllum sinclairii is a common species of northern coastal cliffs, shrub lands (especially gumland scrub), and secondary regrowth but it is also known from forested slopes (especially kauri forest), and also colonises, along ridgelines and mountain slopes. *Dracophyllum sinclairii* is most common north of Auckland and Thames and in this area it is especially common in gumland scrub and seral vegetation.



Kennedy Bay. July. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Kennedy Bay. July. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Single-stemmed small tree 1.0–7.6 m tall. Bark on old branches dark grey to blackish brown, finely to deeply fissured, young stems reddish brown. Leaves dimorphic. Juvenile leaves spirally arranged along branches, spreading to recurved; lamina sheath, 9.0–30.0 × 5.0–12.7 mm, shoulders tapering to truncate and margin entire, occasionally ciliate in upper half; lamina subcoriaceous to coriaceous, 85.0–221.0 × 2.5–9.0 mm, linear-triangular, surfaces glabrous with a patch of scabrid hairs at base of adaxial surface; margins serrulate with 50–70 teeth per 10 mm. Adult leaves spreading to recurved, glaucous to light green (occasionally light brown); lamina sheath 3.5–7.3 × 3.3–6.6 mm, rounded to truncate and margin membranous with the top half ciliate; lamina 37–95 × 1–5 mm, linear-triangular, surfaces glabrous with a tuft of scabrid hairs at base on adaxial surface; slightly striated; margins serrulate with 60–80 teeth per 10 mm. Inflorescence a terminal spike; shorter than leaves, erect, drooping later, dense, 14.5–34.7 mm long, linear-oblong; inflorescence bract over-topping flowers, 7.0–8.0 × 0.7–1.0 mm, ovate to broadly ovate, adaxial surface glabrous with a patch of scabrid hairs at base; margins serrulate. Flowers 4–9, sessile. Flower bracts over-topping flowers, 6–20 × 3–4 mm, ovate, adaxial surfaces sericeous; abaxial surfaces glabrous to scabrid; margins minutely serrulate. Sepals 2.5–6.0 × 1.2–2.0 mm, ovate-lanceolate, longer than corolla tube; adaxial surfaces with the top half pubescent; margins ciliate. Corolla white; corolla tube 4.0–4.5 × 2.5–3.0 mm, narrowly-campanulate, widened at mouth; corolla lobes spreading horizontally to reflexed, 2.3–2.5 × 1.7–2.2 mm, triangular, shorter than corolla tube; apex inflexed, subacute; adaxial surface papillate. Stamens inserted on corolla tube in the upper third, filaments 0.5–1.0 mm long; anthers included, 0.8–1.0 mm long, rectangular, light yellow. Ovary 1.4–1.5 × 1.4–1.5 mm, obovate, apex round or oblong, and then 1.3–1.4 × 0.6–0.7 mm with apices mostly bidentate, sometimes irregularly toothed; style included, 1.3–1.5 mm long, glabrous; stigma five-lobed. Fruit 1.5–3.5 × 1.5–2.5 mm, obovoid, light brown; apex truncate, glabrous. Seeds 1.0–1.3 mm long, ovoid, yellowish brown, testa slightly reticulate.

SIMILAR TAXA

Dracophyllum sinclairii is distinguished from other *Dracophyllum* species by the large juvenile leaves, slightly striated adult leaves; by the inflorescences borne on the lateral branches grouped together below the leaves of the main branch; by the flower bracts which are longer than the flower and covered in dense long silky hairs on the upper surfaces (in some populations only at the top half); by the sepals which are longer than the corolla tube and which are silky hairy in the top half on the upper surface; and also by the narrow campanulate corolla tube. *Dracophyllum sinclairii* is most similar to *D. lessonianum* from which it differs in having a much wider (2.5–9.0 mm compared to 1.6–1.8 mm) juvenile leaves with a patch of scabrid hairs at the base on the adaxial surface. The adult leaf is also wider (2–3 mm compared to 0.5–1.2 mm) with an acute apex which is not prominently triquetrous. The inflorescence bract also has a serrulate rather than entire margin. The corolla tube in *D. sinclairii* is narrowly campanulate not cylindrical, shorter (4.0–4.5 mm compared to 5–6 mm) and wider (2.5–3.0 mm compared to 2.0–2.5 mm).

FLOWERING

January – November

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

March - August

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult - should not be removed from the wild

THREATS

Not Threatened

ETYMOLOGY

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

sinclairii: After Sinclair (c. 1796–1861). Colonial Secretary and naturalist.

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 28 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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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/dracophyllum-sinclairii/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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