

Myrsine argentea

COMMON NAME

Mt Burnett matipo

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Primulaceae

AUTHORITY

Myrsine argentea Heenan et de Lange

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 46

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD, OL

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD, OL

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Greyish green shrub bearing spotted leaves inhabiting Mt Burnett (near Collingwood). Leaves with small dent at tip and small dark blotch at base, 5-20mm long by 5-15mm wide. Fruit white, rarely with some pink.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, North West Nelson, Mt Burnett.

HABITAT

Dolomite karrenfield and associated cloud forest.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub or small tree up to 9 m tall. Branches leafy throughout, upright and spreading not drooping or divaricating. Bark smooth, grey, trunks with occasional ring-like constrictions (especially near base). Leaves alternate, 5-20 x 5-15 mm, obovate to obcordate, rarely oval or orbicular, apex retuse, silver-green to pale green or cream-green, with a dark blotch at leaf-base. Females flowers solitary or in bunches of 2-4 flowers. Sepals 4, 0.75-1 x 0.75 mm, broad oval, brown to brown-pink, Petals (3-)4, 1-1.6 x 1-1.1 mm, pale yellow to yellow-pink, obovate, recurved at maturity. Male flowers in bunches of 3-4 flowers. Fruit a circular drupe, white, very rarely flushed pink at base.



Mt Burnett, Golden Bay. Photographer: Simon Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.



At Mt Burnett, Golden Bay. Photographer: Simon Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

Part of the *M. divaricata* complex. Collectively the seven species of this group can be recognised by their circular fruits and small, leafy branches. Of these species *M. argentea* is most likely to be confused with *M. divaricata*, with which it consistently shares the dark blotch at the leaf petiole junction. However, *M. divaricata* though variable in form, has predominantly purple drupes, and usually drooping or pendant interlaced branches.

FLOWERING

August to October, peaking in September

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Yellow

FRUITING

April to May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh fruit. Can be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings, which can be slow to strike.

THREATS

This species is endemic to the dolomite and dolomite limestone exposures on Mt Burnett - an area of about 6 ha. Here it is threatened by the dolomite mining of the mountain. Recent (2006) decisions to restrict dolomite mining have reduced some of this threat but the species is still at risk from the spread of weeds, particularly Mexican daisy (*Erigeron karvinskianus*) which colonise the open ground this species preferentially regenerates into. Mine roads and vehicles remain a constant threat because they help facilitate the spread of weeds across the mountain. It remains to be seen whether measures imposed on the mining company to control weed spread and rehabilitate old mine workings will prevent further decline in this species, and the other special plants of Mt Burnett.

ETYMOLOGY

mysine: Myrrh

argentea: Silvery

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available. Some plants are held at Percy Reserve, Otari and Auckland Botanic Gardens.

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE

Myrsine argentea plants are slow to establish on old mined ground and are especially vulnerable when young to trampling and animal browse. The species can at times be seriously browsed by possums which are common in the area.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 October 2003. Description modified from Heenan & de Lange (1998).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Heenan, P.B.; de Lange, P. J. 1998: A new and remarkably local species of *Myrsine* (Myrsinaceae) from New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 36(3): 381-387

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myrsine-argentea/>