

Solanum opacum

COMMON NAME

green berry nightshade

FAMILY

Solanaceae

AUTHORITY

Solanum opacum A.Braun et C.D.Bouché

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Data Deficient

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: Kermadec Islands, North Island, probably elsewhere. A widespread species in the Pacific Basin and Australasia.

HABITAT

A species of coastal and lowland, often early stage successional habitats. Also found in wasteland and urban areas growing with *S. nigrum* and *S. americanum*.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

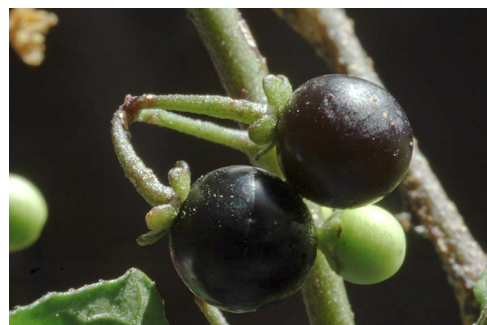
Annual or short-lived perennial herb, forming spindly plants or densely branched bushes up to 1 m tall, all parts either glabrous or silky hairy.

Stems unarmed or weakly armed. **Leaves** on petioles (10)–20–60 mm long; lamina variable, 10–50–(80) × 8–40–(76) mm, green, yellow-green, dark-green, often blotched or tinged maroon, sometimes purple-green; ovate, ovate-oblong, lanceolate-ovate, entire, sinuate or coarsely toothed (sometimes distantly so), rarely lobulate, base attenuate to broadly attenuate, sometimes narrowly winged; apex acute.

Inflorescences umbellate, (3)–5–6–(10)-flowered, peduncles stout, 10–20 mm long, pedicels deflexed (strongly so at fruiting). **Calyx** 2–3 mm diameter at anthesis, accrescent; lobes broadly ovate to oblong, usually strongly reflexed at fruiting (sometimes with mixtures of mostly reflexed, and some weakly accrescent). **Corolla** 5–8 mm diameter, stellate, white or pale mauve, lobes narrowly lanceolate to narrowly deltoid. **Anthers** 1.0–1.5 mm. **Berry** up to 10 mm diameter, globose, green, purple-black or black, dull (not glossy); stone cells present. **Seeds** 1.0–2.5 mm diameter, obovate to broadly obovate or circular, compressed, orange-yellow to pale tan, glossy or not.



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SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from *Solanum nigrum* by the umbellate inflorescences, smaller stamens (1.0–1.5 mm long cf. 2 mm or more in length), smaller flowers with a stellate corolla, mostly reflexed, sometimes weakly accrescent calyx lobes, and dull purple-black to greenish-black fruits. *Solanum nigrum* has consistently accrescent calyx lobes, glossy purple black (in New Zealand plants) fruits, larger stamens, and larger flowers without a stellate corolla. *Solanum opacum* differs from *S. americanum* by having much broader, larger reflexed to weakly accrescent calyx lobes—the calyx lobes of *S. americanum* are always reflexed, smaller and much narrower. All three species are genetically distinct from and do not hybridize with each other.

FLOWERING

Throughout the year

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

Throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. However, like all members of the *S. nigrum* group, inclined to be weedy.

THREATS

Probably 'Not Threatened' but as the presence of this species in New Zealand has only recently (2017) been recognized (specimens of this species have previously been confused with *S. americanum* and *S. nigrum*) as a precautionary measure it would be appropriate to treat *S. opacum* as 'Data Deficient' until more information becomes available. Indications are that it is likely to be widespread, at least in northern New Zealand, and it is present on the Kermadec Islands.

ETYMOLOGY

solanum: Derivation uncertain - possibly from the Latin word sol, meaning "sun," referring to its status as a plant of the sun. Another possibility is that the root was solare, meaning "to soothe," or solamen, meaning "a comfort," which would refer to the soothing effects of the plant upon ingestion.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for the NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 30 November 2017. Description by P.J. de Lange

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Solanum opacum* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/solanum-opacum/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/solanum-opacum/>