

# Cordyline obtecta

## COMMON NAME

Three Kings cabbage tree

## SYNONYMS

*Cordyline kaspar* W.R.B.Oliv. (New Zealand only). *C. baueri* Hook.f. nom. superfl. (Norfolk Island only)

## FAMILY

Asparagaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Cordyline obtecta* (Graham) Baker

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Monocotyledons

## NVS CODE

COROBT

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 38

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, SO, Sp

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, SO, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Palm-like small tree with many erect branches or multiple trunks that have tufts of tough long narrow pointed leaves inhabiting the northern tip of the North Island and offshore islands. Leaves 60-65cm long by 5.5-7cm wide, usually erect, midrib not obvious. Fruit small, white.

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: Three Kings Islands (North East Island, Manawa Tawhi (Great Island), South West Island and West Island), North Island (North Cape and Murimotu Island), Poor Knights Islands (Aorangi and Tawhiti Rahi). Also present on Norfolk Island, which is the type Locality for *Cordyline obtecta*.



*Cordyline obtecta* tree, Great (Manawa Tahwi) Island, Three Kings Islands. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.



In cultivation, Auckland. Dec 2006. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout, widely branched tree to 6 m tall; trunk solitary or multi-trunked from base. Trunks up 0.45 m dbh; bark copious, firm, corky, grey-brown. Leaves concolorous, yellow-green, green to glaucous-green, often curved in upper half to one third; lamina 0.60–0.65–1.0 × 0.055–0.07(–0.10) mm, broadly, lanceolate to ± oblanceolate, widest above middle; narrowed above base into short, hardly channelled petiole of half lamina-width or less; lamina similar on both surfaces, widest above middle; midrib obscure adaxially, more prominent abaxially, widened towards base, paler than rest of lamina; nerves fine, subequal, ± parallel but meeting midrib at appreciable angle. Inflorescence a broad densely flowered panicle 0.8–1.0(–1.2) m long, branched to second or third order, branches well spaced, lower bracts foliaceous, green entire or bilobed; ultimate racemes c. 100–200(–300) mm long, c.20 mm diameter (including flowers); axes visible between flowers. Peduncle very stout 10–30 mm diameter. Flowers white, strongly and very sweetly scented; perianth c.5–6 mm long, tube c.2 mm long; tepals patent. Stamens about the same length as tepals; filaments long-connate or not, if connate then the free portion as broad as the anther and not much longer. Stigma shortly trifid. Fruit c.4 mm diameter, globose, white. Seeds c.3.5 mm diameter, glossy, deeply notched on one side. Description adapted from Moore & Edgar (1970).

## FLOWERING

September - December

## FLOWER COLOURS

White

## FRUITING

March - June

## LIFE CYCLE

Fleshy berries are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed, emergent shoot, stem and even trunk cuttings. Reasonably hardy, certainly less prone to Cabbage Tree Decline. *Cordyline obtecta* will tolerate most soils and moisture regimes but dislikes long periods of drought and is frost sensitive. Excellent in pots and tubs.

## THREATS

Not Threatened in New Zealand though it is very localised and so possibly at some risk on Norfolk Island. In New Zealand *Cordyline obtecta* is very common on the main islands of the Three Kings which are protected as Nature Reserves. It is less common south of there but still rather widespread especially on remote Murimotu and the Poor Knights Islands (another Nature Reserve).

## ETYMOLOGY

**cordyline:** From the Greek kordyle 'club'

**obtecta:** Covered over; protected

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 February 2011. Description adapted from Moore & Edgar (1970).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970: Flora of New Zealand Vol. II. Wellington, Government Printer.

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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## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/cordyline-obtecta/>