



# Mistletoes

Mistletoes are semi-parasitic plants that grow on other plants. They have leaves or stems for photosynthesis, but get water and nutrients from the host tree or shrub. Look out for them during December to January when they are flowering and most visible.

## Quick Facts

Semi-parasitic plants that get water and nutrients from host.

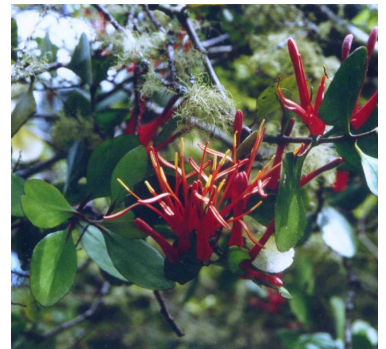
All eight remaining species can be found in Southland.

Tui and bellbirds have learned to twist open beech mistletoe flowers to gather nectar, thereby pollinating them.

## New Zealand mistletoes

There are nine mistletoe species native to New Zealand, however one is now presumed to be extinct. These include:

- three beech mistletoes:
  1. red mistletoe (*Peraxilla tetrapetala*)
  2. scarlet mistletoe (*Peraxilla colensoi*)
  3. yellow mistletoe (*Alepis flavida*)
- three dwarf mistletoes:
  1. *Korthalsella salicornioides*
  2. *Korthalsella lindsayi*
  3. *Korthalsella clavata*
- two species of green mistletoe:
  1. *Illeostylus micranthus*
  2. white mistletoe (*Tupeia Antarctica*) (see bottom left).



Scarlet mistletoe

*Trilepidea adamsii* is presumed extinct. All eight remaining mistletoe species are found in Southland, with Southland being a national stronghold for mistletoe populations in the country.

## Beech mistletoes

Beech mistletoes (known by various names, including pirata) are found throughout New Zealand. They are known for their red, scarlet and yellow flowers. Some of the largest beech mistletoes in the country can be found in Southland. Many sites are very accessible to see:

- Scarlet mistletoes live on silver beech and are found throughout Fiordland, western Southland and the Blue Mountains. The most accessible places to see them are at Borland, Tuatapere Domain and the Blue Mountains (e.g. Whisky Gully).
- Red mistletoes live on silver beech. They can be found at the same places as scarlet mistletoes, although they are less abundant.
- Yellow mistletoes (see bottom right) live on mountain beech. They are most easily seen at Lake Mavora, Manapouri and Te Anau lakeshore.



## Dwarf mistletoes



Dwarf mistletoes (see left) are found on small trees and shrubs. They are most commonly found on mingimingi (*Coprosma propinqua*) and manuka - usually on older, naturally occurring stands. In Southland they are found from Stewart Island, around Invercargill Estuary (at Gambles Boardwalk in Otatara), across to Manapouri and Te Anau lakeshores. However, they are very cryptic, mimic their hosts and are easily overlooked.

## White mistletoe

The rarest mistletoe species in Southland is the white mistletoe (*Tupeia antarctica*). They are most commonly found on marbleleaf (*Carpodetus serratus*) and lowland ribbonwood (*Plagianthus regius*). It can be found from the Waiau Valley in the west over to the Blue Mountains in the east and is most easily seen at Forest Hill near Winton and the Hokonui Hills near Gore.

## Green mistletoe

The most common mistletoe is the green mistletoe *Illeostylus micranthus*. This species has a very wide range of hosts (most commonly *Coprosma propinqua*), including many exotic species. It is widespread across Southland in coastal lowland areas and can also be seen at Gambles Boardwalk in Otatara.

## Why are we concerned about mistletoes?

New Zealand mistletoes are not common and many species are in serious decline. Decline in numbers has been most dramatic since the early 1990s, mainly due to:

- possum browse
- loss of habitat, due to vegetation clearance
- declining numbers of native birds that pollinate mistletoes and disperse their seeds.

If mistletoe numbers continue to decline, local populations may disappear, which may in turn lead to nation-wide extinction of some species.

## What's being done?

In Southland the main protection given to beech mistletoes is possum control. For other species, physical or legal protection of sites is sought. The Department of Conservation has prepared a National Recovery Plan to coordinate conservation effort and ensure the long-term survival of mistletoes throughout New Zealand.

## How you can help

If you can mistletoe plants on your property, look after them by:

- not removing them or their host trees or habitats during vegetation clearance or trimming
- controlling possums and other pests, not only protecting the mistletoes but also the birds that pollinate them and spread their seeds
- not picking the flowers or foliage (especially at Christmas!) as they take a long time to recover.

Remember to take photographs and note the host tree they are growing on. Report any mistletoe sightings to the Department of Conservation.

### Find out more

Visit the Southland Threatened Plant Garden to find out more about mistletoes and other threatened plants in Southland.

Garden is open by prior arrangement:  
Phone 213 1161