Pittosporum obcordatum

Common Name(s):
Heart-leaved kohuhu

Current Threat Status (2012):
Threatened - Nationally Vulnerable

Distribution:
Endemic New Zealand. Known from the North and South Islands. In the North Island it is known from Awanui south to the Wairarapa, with a primarily easterly distribution. In the South Island now known from several sites in the Catlins west to Lake Manapouri. About 40 plants were recently (2012) rediscovered by Melissa Hutchison on Banks Peninsula, the type locality of the species, after not being seen there for c. 170 years (Wilson, H. 2013. NZ Bot. Soc. News. ll2)

Habitat:
A species of primarily eastern lowland alluvial forest, favouring sites prone to summer drought being otherwise waterlogged, and frost-prone during winter.

Features:
Small, usually single-trunked columnar tree 5–8m tall. Branches numerous, interlacing, filuminate-divaricating. Branchlets grey to reddish-brown hairy, glabrate. Leaves alternate at seedling stage and on young branchlets, later confined to the tips of brachyblasts, numerous, tomentulose to glabrous, submembranous when young, coriaceous when adult, margins entire or crenate, flat or revolute, sparsely ciliate; seedling lamina: 5.0–10.0 × 2.5–8.0mm, oblong, narrowly oblong, oblongolate to elliptic, linear or spathulate, usually with apices deeply lobed, toothed and parted, sometimes entire, dark brown-green, dark green, a mottled yellow-green; subadult lamina: 3.5–6.0 × 4.0–6.0mm, oblong, narrowly oblong to elliptic, obcordate-trilobate, dark green to yellow-green, sometimes mottled; adult lamina: 2.8–4.0 × 3.0–4.0mm, orbicular, ovate (with those near branchlet tips often rhomboid or entire); apex obtuse, to blunt. Inflorescences on axillary or terminal, brachyblasts, 5–8mm long, 1–5–flowered umbelate, fascicles; pedicels c. 2mm, accrescent in fruit, pubescent, subtended by 1–5 leaves and numerous 1–2mm, caducous, sparsely ciliate, pubescent bracts. Flowers night-fragrant, gynodioecious. Sepals 1.5–3.0 × 0.5–1.0mm, lanceolate-subulate, ovate-subulate, acute, ciliate; petals 4.0–6.5 × 0.7–1.5mm, linear-oblong, lanceolate, obtuse to subacute; connate as a short cylindrical tube with strongly reflexed tips, pink maroon or pale yellow, and then often with red-tined margins, or striped red. Male flowers: stamens 4, filaments 2.5–4.0mm long, pink or yellow, anthers 0.5–1.0mm long, yellow or pinkish yellow; gynoeclium rudimentary or functional. Female flowers: stamens 4 rudimentary (often reduced to staminodes); ovary 1.5–3.3 × 0.5–1.5mm, globose, finely pubescent to hairy; style 1.0–1.2mm long; stigma capitate, obscurely 2–lobed or truncate. Capsules 2-valved, 6.5–10.0 × 5.0–7.0mm, ovoid, subovoid to ellipsoid, apiculate, green to black, coriaceous, weakly rugose, sparsely hairy, glabrate; mucilage yellow. Seeds 2–6, irregular, globose, lustrous dark black.

Flowering:
Late September to early December

Fruiting:
December to May but long persistent, such that fruit on well established plants may be found at anytime of the year.

Threats:
Primarily threatened by loss of habitat. Initially this was caused by the widespread clearance of the easterly, lowland alluvial forest habitats this species favours. However, decline has continued, even within many protected forest remnants due to subtle changes in forest microclimate and hydrology, bought about by habitat fragmentation, and also many populations are threatened by the spread of aggressive weeds, which suppress (or prevent) regeneration, and can smother adult trees. Some locations consist of single trees, which are then in effect reproductively extinct. However, like many Pittosporum, plants may be either female, male or sexually inconstant, so some isolated individuals can set seed.

*Attribution:
Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 30 August 2006. Description adapted from Cooper (1956).

References and further reading:


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