

Alepis flavida

COMMON NAME

Yellow mistletoe, pirita, piriraki

SYNONYMS

Elytranthe flavida (Hook.f.) Engl. *Loranthus flavidus* Hook. F.

FAMILY

Loranthaceae

AUTHORITY

Alepis flavida (Hook.f.) Tiegh.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

ALEFLA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 24

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD

2004 | Gradual Decline

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Semi-parasitic shrub mainly on outer branches of beech trees. Obvious when in flower or from flowers fallen to ground. Leaves oval, dull green and with a reddish margin. Flowers tubular, orange-yellow, in small clusters.

DISTRIBUTION

North Island and South Island, New Zealand

HABITAT

Its host is most commonly mountain or black beech but it has been recorded on 13 species, all indigenous to New Zealand. In North Island the species is dispersed by bellbird (*Anthoris melanura*). It has never been common in the North Island.



Close up of flowers. Photographer: David A. Norton, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Foliage. Photographer: David A. Norton, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

This species is a shrub that can grow up to 2 m across. It has leathery leaves that are 2-6cm long, narrow and dull green with deciduous tip. The leaves sit in pairs on opposite sides of the stem and are thick and fleshy with a matt surface. The margins of the leaves are red and are rough to touch. Veins are visible on the lower surface of the leaves. Its flowers are small with orange-yellow to yellow tepals that open right back. The fruit are small, shiny, translucent oval berries (approximately 4-5mm long) and ripen to yellow or gold although fruit have been recorded as yellow, green and orange on herbarium sheets at the Landcare herbarium in Lincoln (CHR).

SIMILAR TAXA

Peraxilla colensoi, *P. tetrapetala*. *Alepis flavida* has disc-like attachment structures and oblong leaves with red margins. The plant grows in the outer branches of its host. *Peraxilla colensoi* and *P. tetrapetala* are more leafy, have red flowers, round or diamond-shaped leaves with no red margin. They have different attachment structures and usually grow on the trunks of the host tree.

FLOWERING

December to February.

FLOWER COLOURS

Orange, Yellow

FRUITING

Fruiting from January.

LIFE CYCLE

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

THREATS

Animal pests (including possums), fire, collectors, destruction of habitat and hosts, vegetation succession, fungal diseases.

ETYMOLOGY

flavida: Pale yellow

EXTRA INFORMATION

Story in *Trilepidea* Issue 31 (June 2006) about rediscovery of *Alepis flavida* in Wellington.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 August 2003. Description based on Allan (1961).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. 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

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alepis-flavida/>