

Brachyglottis huntii

COMMON NAME

rautini, Chatham Island Christmas tree

SYNONYMS

Senecio huntii F.Muell.

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Brachyglottis huntii (F.Muell.) B.Nord.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

BRAHUN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 60

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, IE, RF, RR

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, IE, RF, RR

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, IE

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Large spreading grey-green shrub inhabiting peatlands of the Chatham Islands. Twigs brittle and bearing leaf scars. Leaves 5-10cm long, narrow, rolled, thin, grey-green, pale underneath, shiny, margin wavy. Flowers with many radiating yellow petals, clustered together.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to the Chatham Islands. Found on both Chatham Island and Pitt Island. It was once much more common and widespread on Chatham Island but has declined seriously over the last century. On Pitt Island it is still quite widespread; expanding where stock and feral animals are in low numbers, but diminishing elsewhere.

HABITAT

Brachyglottis huntii prefers frequently disturbed and/or early successional habitats, such as those found along stream and river sides, open shrubland, drier swamps, and along ridge crests. It is usually found growing on permanently moist forest and restiad peats and cannot tolerate protracted periods of drought, or heavy shade.



Brachyglottis huntii tree in clear. Photographer: Barbara Mitcalfe, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Chatham Islands. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Aromatic, small woody tree up to 6 x 6 m. Bark grey, flaking usually in small shards. Branches stout, spreading, usually bearing numerous leaf scars, leaf toward apex, dead leaves long persistent. Leaves 70-180 x 20-40 mm, ovate, elliptic-lanceolate, grey green, apex subacute, lamina entire or finely toothed in upper third; buds and emergent leaves viscid, resinous, rather aromatic, initially densely clad on both surfaces with fulvous tomentum, becoming glabrescent with age. Inflorescences in dense, terminal panicles, subtended by leaves, all parts viscous, resinous. Pedicels stout, 5-15 mm long, densely glandular pubescent. Capitula 20-30 mm diam., involucral bracts 10-12(-15), narrow-oblong, obtuse to subacute, grey-green, glandular on under sides, ciliate on margins, apex surmounted by a conspicuous tuft of hairs. Ray-florets 15-20, ligules c. 10 mm long, yellow, broad, recurving with age. Cypsela (seeds) 1.5-1.8 mm long, narrow-oblong, pale brown to brown, grooved, glabrescent; pappus-hairs 5-7 mm long, off-white, slender, distinctly barbellate.

SIMILAR TAXA

Brachyglottis stewartiae (J.B.Armstr.) B.Nord. is related but the leaves in this species have dark glossy upper surfaces, and pure white undersides (due to the dense covering of fine, appressed, hairs)

FLOWERING

November - February

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

FRUITING

Late summer and early autumn

LIFE CYCLE

Pappate achenes are dispersed by wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and semi-hardwood cuttings. However, plants can be difficult to maintain. In cultivation they are prone to sudden collapse from such soil and water borne diseases as phytophthora, verticillium and fusarium wilt. This species does best planted in a semi-shaded site or in a permanently moist, deep peaty soil, with a south-facing aspect. Once planted it should not be disturbed. In ideal conditions it is fast growing and will flower within 1-2 years from seed. This is a naturally short-lived species so it is wise to maintain young stock for replacement of older trees.

THREATS

Brachyglottis huntii was once much more common and widespread on Chatham Island but has declined seriously over the last century. On Pitt Island it is still quite widespread; expanding where stock and feral animals are in low numbers, but diminishing elsewhere. Threats are myriad and include habitat destruction; browsing and trampling by cattle, sheep, pigs and possums. While fire can destroy plants the disturbance caused can also provide fresh sites for seedlings to colonise.

ETYMOLOGY

brachyglottis: Name comes from the Greek words brachus meaning "short" and glottis meaning "the vocal apparatus of the larynx"

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries

NOTES ON STATUS

Recent reports of the sudden collapse of apparently healthy trees are suggestive of such soil borne pathogens as phytophthora and verticillium wilt. There is some evidence to suggest that the species is self-incompatible, because seed collected from isolated trees has very poor germination. This has important implications for future management, particularly on main Chatham, where the species is now seriously threatened, and often represented on parts of the island by isolated individuals.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 11 March 2004. Description subsequently published in de Lange et al. (2010)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Norton, D.A.; Rolfe, J.R.; Sawyer, J.W.D. 2010: Threatened Plants of New Zealand. Christchurch, Canterbury University Press.

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 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/brachyglottis-huntii/>