

# Podocarpus totara var. totara

## COMMON NAME

tōtara

## SYNONYMS

Podocarpus totara G.Benn. ex D.Don

## FAMILY

Podocarpaceae

## AUTHORITY

Podocarpus totara G.Benn. ex D.Don var. totara

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Gymnosperms

## NVS CODE

PODTOT

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 34

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, South Island and Stewart Island/Rakiura. Common throughout most of the North Island and South Island. Present but extremely scarce on Stewart Island/Rakiura (Freshwater River).

## HABITAT

Widespread and at times abundant tree of lowland, montane and lower subalpine forest. May also form a vegetation type in which it is the dominant species.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).



Totara. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.



Totara bark. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Robust dioecious conifer up to 30 m tall. **Trunk** stout, 2–3 m diameter, clad in thick, corky, furrowed and somewhat stringy reddish-grey bark; without branches at base, branches stout, erect to spreading. **Leaf bud** narrower than or the same diameter as branchlet, surrounded by caducous, papery, narrowly lanceolate bracts. **Leaves** brownish-green, erect, leathery; juvenile 20 × 1–2 mm, adults 15–30 × 3–4 mm, linear-lanceolate, acute, apex pungent, mid-vein distinct to obscure. **Male cones (strobili)** axillary 10–15 mm, solitary or in 4s. **Female branchlets** axillary, ovules solitary or paired, receptacle of 2–4 scales, acute and free at tips, maturing as a red, swollen, succulent, sweet tasting “fruit” this surmounted by a 1–(2) broadly elliptic, ovoid-oblong 3–6 mm, semi-glossy, buff, grey nut brown, henna or dark brown (green to glaucous-green) when fresh, seed.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Most frequently confused with *Podocarpus laetus* with which it may co-occur and with which it frequently hybridises. From that species *P. totara* var. *totara* can be distinguished by its thicker bark, less pungent leaf tips, and most readily by the leaf bud which is the same diameter as the branchlet, and by the narrower, lanceolate bracts surrounding the emergent leaves. See also Gardner (1990).

## FLOWERING

(August)–October–(December)

## FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

## FRUITING

Fruits take a year or so to ripen, and may be found throughout the year, usually peaking at about the same time that cones are produced. They are most frequently seen between April and May.

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and hard-wood cuttings.

## THREATS

Not Threatened, though as a vegetation type it is all but extinct throughout most of its former range.

## ETYMOLOGY

**podocarpus**: Foot or stalk fruit

**totara**: After the Maori name, totara

## CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE

The distinctive red, somewhat oily wood was the timber of preference for use by Māori for constructing canoes (waka), and carvings. The stringy bark was harvested to make bags in which to hold preserved birds.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Gardner R. 1990. Totara and Hall's totara. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 45: 27–28.

Moorfield JC. 2005. Te aka : Māori-English, English-Māori dictionary and index. Pearson Longman, Auckland, NZ. 357 p.

Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research. [Year accessed]. Ngā Rauopi Whakaoranga: Māori traditional uses of New Zealand native plants and other organisms. <https://rauopiwhakaoranga.landcareresearch.co.nz/>. Accessed [Insert date accessed].

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/podocarpus-totara-var-totara/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/podocarpus-totara-var-totara/>