Alectryon excelsus subsp. grandis

COMMON NAMES
Three Kings tītoki

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, DPS, IE, RC
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Small tree with spreading branches and a dark fluted trunk of the Three Kings Islands. Leaves with 2-4 offset pairs of glossy dark green leaflets. Flowers red, in small, clustered, sprays. Fruit fleshy red partly surrounding a black seed and expanding from a furry brown capsule.

Castaway Stream, Great Barrier Island, October. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FLOWER COLOURS
Red/Pink

Flowering specimen, Ex Cult. Baylis Stream, Great Island, Three Kings. Photographer: Ewen Cameron, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Small spreading shrub tree 2-7 x 3-10 m; multitrunked from base. Branches stout, erect, all parts invested with fine, velutinous, ferrugineous hairs. Bark brown, lenticillate. Adult leaves light to dark green, vernicose, imparipinnate, alternate 14-70 mm long. Leaflets 2-4 pairs; lamina 90-160 x 60-90 mm, subcoriaceous, broadly oblong or ovate, apex obtuse, subacute often acuminate, base cuneate, truncate to oblique, upper leaf surface vernicose, bullate; lamina margin entire. Inflorescences axillary 90-120 mm long, sparingly branched panicles. Flowers bisexual or staminate. Petals absent. Stamens 5-8 in bisexual and 6-10 in staminate flowers, crimson. Stigma ovoid, in staminate flowers ovary tholiform, style absent, in perfect flowers broadly urceolate, style 1.5-2 mm, erect. Fruits sessile, 1-2-lobed, 15-20 x 10-14 mm, pubescent, globular, carina 3-5 mm long on one side. Seed 8-10 x 6-9 mm, subglobose, black, lustrous, sarcotesta fleshy, scarlet, papillose.

SIMILAR TAXA
Titoki (Alectryon excelsus Gaertn. subsp. excelsus) could be confused with Three Kings Titoki. However, this subspecies is much taller (up to 15 m tall), and usually has a single trunk. The compound leaves have (3-)5(-7) pairs of smooth edged (or toothed) generally narrower leaflets whose surfaces are matt or glossy but never bullate. There are no major differences in the flowers or the fruits.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic to the Three Kings Archipelago, where it is known from Great (Manawa Tawhi) and West Islands.

HABITAT
Coastal Forest, where it often grows along the more exposed margins. Occasionally it is found as a subcanopy tree within the dense kanuka (Kunzea aff. ericoides) forest that dominates the Three Kings Islands.

THREATS
In the past this tree was virtually eliminated by goats. Since goats were eradicated in 1946, Three Kings titoki has gradually increased in range, and is now found in scattered sites across most of the eastern side of Great Island. A single tree has also been reported from West Island.

GENUS
Alectryon

FAMILY
Sapindaceae

AUTHORITY
Alectryon excelsus subsp. grandis (Cheeseman) de Lange et E.K.Cameron

SYNONYMS
Alectryon excelsus var. grandis Cheeseman, Alectryon grandis (Cheeseman) Cheeseman

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October to December

FRUITING
December to April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Fresh seed germinates readily. However, as most seed comes from trees planted nearby titoki (A. excelsus subsp. excelsus) it is difficult to obtain pure seed, and many plants sold by nurseries are F1 hybrids. Hybrids are now commonly seen in street plantings around Auckland City.

ETYMOLOGY
alectryon: In Greek mythology Alectryon was punished and turned into a rooster by Ares after failing to keep watch, possible refers to a cockscomb
excelsus: Tall
grandis: Big

NVS CODE
ALEESG

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 32

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, DP, IE
2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, IE
2009 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: IE, Inc, OL
2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical
Jump to current conservation status

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
de Lange, P.J.; Cameron, E.K.; Murray, B.G. 1999: *Alectryon excelsus* subsp. *grandis* (Sapindaceae): a new combination for an uncommon small tree endemic to the Three Kings Islands, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany 37*: 7-16.

ATTRIBUTION
Description based on de Lange et al. (1999).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Alectryon excelsus subsp. grandis Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alectryon-excelsus-subsp-grandis/ (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/alectryon-excelsus-subsp-grandis/

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