

Elaeocarpus hookerianus

COMMON NAMES

pōkākā

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Small tree with distinct small narrow glossy olive-green and brown wavy leaves to 5cm long on zig zagging interlacing branches on juvenile plants that then develop much larger adult leaves 3-11cm long by 1-3cm wide on straight erect twigs. Flowers white, lacy, drooping, in small sprays. Fruit dark purple, oval.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

SIMILAR TAXA

The juvenile and sub adult form of this species is well marked, and could only be confused with the unrelated *Pittosporum turneri*. It can be distinguished from that by the branches being circular rather than hexagonal, and by the more diverse array of leaf shapes, and usually by the greater preponderance of linear-lanceolate, deeply lobed or serrated leaves. In its adult stage it is somewhat similar to hinau but has much smaller, uniformly darker coloured leaves, and smaller flowers and fruits.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North, South and Stewart Islands - uncommon from Auckland north.

HABITAT

Common tree of lowland to montane forests.

GENUS

Elaeocarpus

FAMILY

Elaeocarpaceae

AUTHORITY

Elaeocarpus hookerianus Raoul

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No



Pinehaven, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 28/12/2004, Licence: CC BY.



Elaeocarpus hookerianus (Pokaka).
Photographer: Wayne Bennett, Licence: CC BY-NC.

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October - January

FRUITING

November - March (- June)

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh fruit - though can be slow to germinate. Moderately easy in most soils, light and moisture regimes. Although it does best in a deep, moist, well mulched soil., it is rather hardy and once established is remarkably drought tolerant. Occasionally hybridises with hinau.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION

As with hinau, pokaka is a beautifully tree which should be more widely grown. The interlacing, divaricating juvenile to sub adult growth form is quite popular with modern landscape gardeners, as such pokaka is more often sold by commercial nurseries than hinau.

ETYMOLOGY

elaecarpus: Olive-seed

hookerianus: Named after Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker (born 1817) - a world famous botanist who travelled on the Antarctic expedition of 1839 under the command of Sir James Ross and wrote "Handbook of New Zealand Flora" published in 1864-67 describing many specimens sent to Kew by collectors. He died in 1911 and has a memorial stone at Westminster Abbey London.

NVS CODE

ELAHOO

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 30

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, PF, RF Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland](#)" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025](#)" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/elaecarpus-hookerianus/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026