

Elingamita johnsonii

COMMON NAME

Elingamita

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Primulaceae

AUTHORITY

Elingamita johnsonii G.T.S.Baylis

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 46

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE, St

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE, OL

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL, IE

2004 | Range Restricted

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Small tree with dark green glossy leaves bearing conspicuous red round fruit inhabiting the Three Kings Islands. Leaves 10-18cm long, leathery, widest towards tip, small pale dots visible when held up against the light. Fruit around 17mm wide, in tight clusters.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Three Kings Islands where it is known only from West Island and two nearby rocky islets in the Princes Group.

HABITAT

Pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) forest and coastal shrub on West island, where it is usually an understorey shrub or small tree. Also grows in exposed places as a canopy emergent, especially on Hinemoa Rock in the Princes Group.



Foliage. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Male Flowers. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout, mostly dioecious tree up to 8 m tall (usually much less). Branches ascending, initially fleshy to sub-succulent, soon becoming woody. Bark grey, smooth (finely lenticellate). Leaves on stout, succulent, coriaceous petioles up to 10 mm long; lamina rigidly coriaceous, 100-200 x 40-190 mm, dark glossy green above, pale beneath, obovate to broadly obovate, margins entire, midrib conspicuous, side veins evident. Inflorescences terminal, paniculate up to 60 x 60 mm, enlarging in fruit; bracteate with bracts shedding as inflorescence matures. Flowers with valvate sepals. Male flowers yellow to yellowish-pink, 4-6-partite, corolla longer than sepals (3-6 x 1.0-1.5 mm), narrowly obovate to broadly oblong. Filaments longer than corolla; anthers elliptic, pollen yellow to yellow-orange. Female flowers pale yellow to pink bearing rudimentary or rarely functional stamens, corolla shorter than sepals, 2.5 x 1-1.5 mm, adnate, shortly oblong to tubular, dehiscing after flowering as a ring. Ovary ovoid, tapered into a stout style. Fruit a globose to subglobose, drupe up to 20 mm diameter, bright red with white flesh. Seed single, enclosed within a brittle subcoriaceous grey-brown to greyish-white endocarp.

SIMILAR TAXA

None - the unusual, greyish, almost turgid trunks and stems, dark green, glossy, entire leaves and large grape-like bunches of red, fleshy fruit are very distinctive.

FLOWERING

February - May, sometimes also August - November

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Yellow

FRUITING

Fruit take a year to ripen so can be present at anytime

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from seed - though this can take up to a year to germinate. Cuttings are slow to strike. Seedlings grow very rapidly and do best in semi-shade, though once established plants thrive in full sun. A fertile, free-draining soil is recommended. This species is predominantly dioecious, so male and female plants are needed to ensure that the attractive grape-like bunches of red fruit are produced. An excellent small specimen tree for the garden. However, very sensitive to cold and frost.

THREATS

Currently not threatened but the entire world population occupies a rather small area on one rocky island and two very small adjacent rock islets. These habitats are currently rodent-free. So the species remains vulnerable to stochastic events, fire, and as the fruit is very palatable rats.

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE

The tree takes its name from its original discovery on West Island, the island that was hit by the steamer the 'Elingamite'. The red, fleshy fruit are edible, the flesh tasting somewhat like an oily, salty apple.

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

Elingamita is one of New Zealand's endemic, monotypic genera. Its relationship to other genera of the Primulaceae has yet to be properly established.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by Peter J. de Lange (17 July 2004).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/elingamita-johnsonii/>