

# Kunzea ericoides

## COMMON NAME

kānuka

## SYNONYMS

Leptospermum ericoides A.Rich.

## FAMILY

Myrtaceae

## AUTHORITY

Kunzea ericoides (A.Rich) Joy Thomps.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## NVS CODE

KUNEVE

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, De

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Common tree of the northern South Island only. Bark flaky. Branches often pendent at ends, bearing masses of needle-like bright green leaves and clusters of small white flowers. Branchlets appearing hairless (sparsely covered in very small erect hairs (20× magnification)). Leaves to 25 mm long, soft to grasp. Flowers borne in 'corymbiform' clusters, white with a red centre. Fruit a small dry capsule 1.9–3.4 × 1.8–3.9 mm.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (north of the Buller and Wairau Rivers. Most common in North-west Nelson).

## HABITAT

Coastal to lowland shrubland, regenerating forest and forest margins, also present in montane forest, ultramafic shrubland and very occasionally present in subalpine shrubland.



Kunzea ericoides - tree showing weeping branches characteristic of this species.  
Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Pupu Walkway & Springs 5 Jan 2006.  
Photographer: Mike Wilcox, Licence: All rights reserved.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Trees up to 18 m. **Trunk** 1–4, 0.10–0.85 m d.b.h. Early bark brown to grey-brown, ± elongate, usually firmly attached, margins elongate sinuous, ± entire with scarcely any flaking; old bark similar. **Branches** slender, initially ascending soon spreading, apices often pendulous. **Branchlets** numerous, slender, glabrescent; indumentum sparse, deciduous, hairs divergent 0.02–0.05 mm long; leaves of branchlets densely crowded along stems. **Leaves** sessile, ± glabrous, except for the margins; lamina 4.0–25.0 × 0.5–1.8 mm, green to yellow-green, linear, linear-lanceolate, to narrowly lanceolate, straight or with upper ¼ weakly recurved, apex acute, sometimes cuspidate, base attenuate; lamina margins initially finely sericeous, glabrate or glabrous; hairs forming a fine, discontinuous band failing just short of lamina apex. **Inflorescence** a compact corymbiform to shortly elongate 3–15-flowered botryum up to 60 mm long. **Pherophylls** foliose ± persistent, 1 per flower; lamina 3.0–7.8 × 0.9–1.4 mm, elliptic, lanceolate to narrowly lanceolate, apex acute, base attenuate. **Pedicels** 1.6–3.8 mm long at anthesis, usually glabrous. **Flower buds** pyriform to narrowly obconic, apex of mature buds weakly domed to flat, calyx lobes distant. **Flowers** 4.1–8.3 mm diam; hypanthium 1.4–3.2 × 1.9–4.1 mm; sharply obconic, apex terminating in 5 persistent suberect to spreading calyx lobes, glabrous (very rarely with basal ¼ finely, sparsely covered in minute hairs). **Calyx lobes** 5, suberect to spreading, 0.4–1.0 × 0.4–1.0 mm, orbicular, obtuse to broadly deltoid, red-green, pink or crimson, margins glabrous or finely ciliate. **Receptacle** green or pink at anthesis, darkening to crimson or dark magenta after fertilisation. **Petals** 5, 1.4–2.6 × 1.5–2.0 mm, white, orbicular, suborbicular to narrowly ovate, spreading, apex rounded, entire or very finely denticulate, oil glands usually not evident when fresh, ± colourless. **Stamens** 10–34 in 1–2 weakly defined whorls, filaments white; anthers dorsifixed, 0.35–0.48 × 0.16–0.24 mm, broadly ellipsoid; pollen white; anther connective gland prominent, pink or pinkish-orange when fresh, drying red to orange, ± spheroidal ± coarsely papillate. **Ovary** 4–5 locular, each with 16–24 ovules in two rows on each placental lobe. **Style** 1.5–2.2 mm long at anthesis; stigma capitate, about 1¼× the style diam., flat, cream or white, flushing pink after anthesis, surface very finely granular-papillate. **Fruits** rarely persistent, 1.9–3.4 × 1.8–3.9 mm, glabrous, dark green to reddish-green, maturing brown to grey-brown to grey-black, cupular, barrel-shaped, shortly cylindrical to hemispherical, calyx valves erect with the apices incurved, split concealed by dried, erect, free portion of hypanthium. **Seeds** 1.00–1.05 × 0.32–0.50 mm, semi-glossy, orange-brown to dark brown, obovoid, oblong, oblong-ellipsoid, or cylindrical and ± curved, surface coarsely reticulate.

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to the Myrtaceae of New Zealand

## SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from all other members of the *Kunzea ericoides* complex by the glabrescent to glabrous branchlets. The bright green, finely, linear-lanceolate leaves and small flowers with very low stamen numbers also help to identify this variety.

## FLOWERING

October–February

## FLOWER COLOURS

White

## FRUITING

November–March

## LIFE CYCLE

Seeds are dispersed by wind and possibly water (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from fresh seed. Seed must be sown fresh, even if left for a few weeks before sowing viability can drop, especially if seed is allowed to dry out. Very difficult from cuttings, though soft wood water shoots give the best results.

## THREATS

Some stands are at risk from clearance for farmland or through felling for firewood.

The arrival of myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) in New Zealand (April 2017) is anticipated to have dire consequences for all New Zealand Myrtaceae. Myrtle rust is an invasive fungus which threatens native myrtle species—learn more [myrtlerust.org.nz](http://myrtlerust.org.nz).

## ETYMOLOGY

**kunzea:** Named after Gustav Kunze (4 October 1793, Leipzig –30 April 1851), 19th century German botanist from Leipzig who was a German professor of zoology, an entomologist with an interest mainly in ferns and orchids

**ericoides:** Like a heath

## WHERE TO BUY

Uncommon in cultivation. It does not seem to be commercially available. Most plants sold as *K. ericoides* are another, very common, allied species *Kunzea robusta*.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 25 August 2014. Description modified from de Lange (2014).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange PJ. 2014. A revision of the New Zealand *Kunzea ericoides* (Myrtaceae) complex. *Phytokeys* 40: 185 p. <https://doi.org/10.3897/phytokeys.40.7973>.

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309.

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Kunzea ericoides* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/kunzea-ericoides/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/kunzea-ericoides/>