**Leptospermum scoparium var. scoparium**

**COMMON NAME**
mānuka, kahikātoa

**SYNONYMS**
None - a myriad of varieties have been proposed none of which has been strictly synonymised within L. scoparium. Allan (1961) discusses some of these, and accepted one (var. incanum). A modern taxonomic assessment of Leptospermum scoparium is urgently needed.

**FAMILY**
Myrtaceae

**AUTHORITY**
Leptospermum scoparium J.R.Forst. et G.Forst. var. scoparium

**FLORA CATEGORY**
Vascular – Native

**ENDEMIC TAXON**
No

**ENDEMIC GENUS**
No

**ENDEMIC FAMILY**
No

**STRUCTURAL CLASS**
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

**CHROMOSOME NUMBER**
2n = 22

**CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS**
2018 | At Risk – Declining

**PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES**
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION**
Common small prickly shrub or small tree with flaky bark and more or less hairy new growth and bearing masses of oval pointed leaves and white or pinkish red-centred flowers. Leaves hard, 5-20mm long by 1-8mm wide, prickly to grasp. Flowers to 25mm wide. Fruit a dry 5-7mm wide capsule.

**DISTRIBUTION**
Indigenous to New Zealand and Australia. Most Australian forms of L. scoparium do not match the range seen in New Zealand. However, plants from Tasmania are very similar to, if not identical with some South Island forms, differing in having a lignotuber, wider leaf bases, and longer, more pungent leaf apices. Leptospermum scoparium was also collected once from Rarotonga by Thomas Cheeseman in the 1800s. It has not been found there since. It's biostatus on that island is unclear.

**HABITAT**
Abundant from coastal situations to low alpine habitats.
FEATURES
Decumbent shrub, subshrub, shrub, or small tree up to 5 m in height and in decumbent forms 2–4 m across. Bark light grey to charcoal grey, peeling in long papery flakes, these curling with age. Wood red. Branches numerous erect, spreading or decumbent, arising from base, sometimes sprouting adventitious roots and/or layering on contact with soil. Young branches, young leaves and flower buds densely to sparingly clad in long silky, white hairs. Leaves leathery, pale to dark green, glabrescent to glabrous, linear-filiform, narrowly lanceolate, lanceolate, ob lanceolate, to elliptic or obovate (5–)10–15(–20) x 1–2–5(–8) mm, invariably apex drawn out into a long stiff, pungent point, midrib usually distinct sometimes obscure, leaf margin finely crenate, veins simple, scarcely branched. Flowers solitary in leaf axils, (8–)10–20(–25) mm diam. Receptacle dark red, crimson or pink. Petals white, sometimes flushed pink or dark red. Stamens numerous.

SIMILAR TAXA
With the exception of L. scoparium var. incanum a broad circumscription of the the New Zealand forms of manuka (L. scoparium) has been adopted. In this sense, manuka could only be confused with kanuka (Kunzea spp.) and Great Barrier Island kanuka (Kunzea sinclairii), from which it can be easily distinguished by the hard, persistent, circular, nut-like fruits, with non persistent sepals, sharp-tipped minutely denticulate leaves, and flowers which appear to be solitary.

FLOWERING
Throughout the year

FLOWER COLOURS
Red/Pink, White

FRUITING
The capsules are long persistent so invariably mature plants possess at least some capsules.

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. Difficult from cuttings.

THREATS
Although widespread and common, some stands are at risk from clearance for farmland or through felling for firewood. The recent (2017) arrival of myrtle rust (Austropuccinia psidii) may pose a more serious threat to Leptospermum (see below). See myrtlerust.org.nz for more information about this invasive fungus.

ETYMOLOGY
leptospermum: Slender seed
scoparium: Like a broom

WHERE TO BUY
Commonly cultivated. However many garden forms are horticultural selections based on crosses between L. scoparium var. incanum and white or red-flowered L. scoparium var. scoparium. Some seem to represent natural variations, others may stem for deliberate crosses with Australian forms of L. scoparium and allied species. Recently a number of Australian Leptospermum have been introduced into New Zealand, and these have been deliberately crossed with manuka.

MYRTLE RUST THREAT
Myrtle rust (Austropuccinia psidii) was first detected in New Zealand in 2017. As there is as yet no known effective treatment for that rust. Overseas indications are that this rust is having a serious impact on Myrtaceae worldwide, including causing such severe declines in some that extinction of some species and genera seems inevitable. As such the New Zealand Threat Listing Panel elected to list all indigenous Myrtaceae using the ‘Precautionary Principle’ as ‘Threatened’ (de Lange et al. 2018). Hopefully this assessment will be proved wrong. As of 2018 there have been very few occurrences of myrtle rust on Leptospermum. However, the rust is still in its early establishment phase. Australian experience suggests it may take 10 or more years to truly establish which New Zealand Myrtaceae will be most affected.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 February 2004. Description by P.J. de Lange.
REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING


CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION