

Lophomyrtus bullata

COMMON NAME

Ramarama

SYNONYMS

Myrtus bullata Sol. ex A.Cunn. non Salis. nom. illegit., *Myrtus aotearoana* (E.C.Nelson) E.C.Nelson nom. illegit., *Lophomyrtus aotearoana* E.C.Nelson nom. illegit.

FAMILY

Myrtaceae

AUTHORITY

Lophomyrtus bullata Burret

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

LOPBUL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 22$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2018 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Brownish- or reddish-green bushy shrub bearing pairs of rounded oval bulging shiny leaves that are much paler underneath. New growth fuzzy. Leaves 1.5-3cm long, nearly as wide as long. Flowers white, with many white filaments projecting from shiny white centre. Fruit red to black, on a long stalk.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands. Scarce in the South Island where it ranges to about North Canterbury and Greymouth

HABITAT

Coastal to montane forest and shrubland. Often a locally conspicuous component of the understorey of lowland Podocarp riparian forest. *Lophomyrtus bullata* also occasionally grows on in suitable sites in slope forest, and in wetter areas is sometimes a common component of regenerating shrubland in cut over forest. Where it meets with *rohutu* (*Lophomyrtus obcordata*) the hybrid *L. xralphii* is often commonly found. Sometimes *Lophomyrtus xralphii* is locally dominant occurring in places where ramarama is scarce or has seemingly died out.



Western Hutt hills. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe



Healthy new leaves, Kaitoke, Wellington.

FEATURES

Shrub or tree up to 6 m tall or more. Trunk slender, up to 0.2 m diameter. Bark reddish, fibrous, flaking in small irregular shards, underbark pink. Branches numerous, erect, compactly branched, branchlets initially 4-angled becoming terete with age, rather brittle, finely hairy, hairs \pm persistent. Leaves opposite, coriaceous, finely hirsute when young (hairs somewhat stiffly erect to sericeous, appressed, caducous), maturing glabrous, surface minutely glandular-punctate, oil glands colourless, leaf lamina and petiole decurrent with branchlet; petiole 2-5(-10) mm long, rather brittle; leaf lamina 15-30(-50) \times 10-15(-40) mm, broadly ovate to suborbicular, bullate, apex obtuse or acute and then often minutely apiculate, adaxially dark green to yellow green, mottled and/or spotted with red, maroon or purple-black circular blemishes, abaxially pink or red-tinged. Flowers 4-merous, 12-14 mm diameter, borne in axillary, solitary monads, on slender, 12-14(-18) mm long, hirsute pedicels. Hypanthium subturbinate, not extending beyond ovary summit, calyx lobes 4, 1.5-2.2 mm long, persistent, spreading, elliptic-oblong, obtuse to subacute. Petals 8-10 \times 6-9 mm, suborbicular, white, margins entire to slightly irregular, ciliate, oil glands colourless. Stamens 80-100(-200 or more), free, in 4 (or more) weakly defined whorls, filaments 8-12 mm long, anthers cream, dorsifixed, latrorse. Ovary inferior, 2-3-locular, ovules numerous, in a single row on each linear placenta. Style 10-12 mm long, slender, white, stigma capitate, scarcely dilated. Fruit a broadly ovoid, dark red or black 6-8 mm long berry. Seeds numerous, reniform, 2.7-5.5 mm diameter, testa dark brown, glossy \pm smooth, very hard. Seed description modified from Webb & Simpson (2001).

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily recognised by the suborbicular, bullate (i.e. 'bubbly') usually red-tinged and or mottled leaves.

FLOWERING

November - March

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

January - June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Can also be grown from semi-hardwood and hardwood cuttings. Ramarama (*Lophomyrtus bullata*) is an attractive and remarkably hard shrub that does well when planted in a semi-shaded site, in a free draining, moist, fertile soil enriched with leaf litter and compost. It is also surprisingly drought tolerant. On account of its bullate ("bubbly") leaves and conspicuous flowers ramarama is a very attractive plant that is well worth growing. Ramarama is, however, rarely available from garden centres - although the hybrid swarm between it and rohutu (*Lophomyrtus obcordata* (L. \times ralphii)) including a hideous array of variegated horrors are quite commonly available and grown.

THREATS

Seriously threatened by the arrival of myrtle rust in NZ, resulting in a change of conservation status in 2017 (see 'Attribution' below). To date, ramarama and its hybrids have been found with a higher rate of myrtle rust infection than other Myrtaceae in NZ. Learn more at myrtlerust.org.nz

ETYMOLOGY

lophomyrtus: From the Greek lophos (crest) and myrtus (myrtle)

bullata: Blistered

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 9 February 2011. Seed description modified from Webb & Simpson (2001). Status updated 25.10.19 by C C Ogle, following

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/science-and-technical/nztcs22entire.pdf>

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Webb, C.J.; Simpson, M.J.A. 2001: Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons. Christchurch, Manuka Press.

CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lophomyrtus-bullata/>