

Melicope ternata

COMMON NAMES

wharangi

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Bushy small tree with glossy green leaves composed of three leaflets at the end of a long stalk and clusters of dry fruit enclosing a black shiny seed. Leaf blades 7-10cm, oval, three together on a long stalk. Flowers white. Fruit dry, splitting to show 2-3 seeds on a stalk.

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub or small tree up to 6 m tall. Branchlets slender, pale yellow-green when young. Leaves opposite, 3-foliolate, on petioles up to about 50 mm long; petiolules very short to 5 mm long. Lamina thinly coriaceous, (50)-70-100 x (20)-30-40 mm, subacute to acute, obovate-cuneate to elliptic- to ovate- or obovate-oblong, entire (all forms may be on same plant). Subfloral leaves may be 2-foliolate or single. Inflorescence of often paired axillary cymes, frequently tri-branched, on peduncles approximately 20 mm long; bracts minute, ovate; pedicels approximately 5 mm long. Flowers perfect or unisexual, 8-10 mm diameter. Sepals ovate-oblong, about 1.5 mm long, gland-dotted; petals greenish, ovate-oblong, concavo-convex, about 5 mm long, gland-dotted. Ovary glabrous, style short, stout. Disk annular, lobulate. Cocci approximately 5 mm long, pale brown, wrinkled and punctulose. Seed approximately 5 mm long, black, glossy, testa brittle.

SIMILAR TAXA

The hybrid between *M. simplex* x *M. ternata*, usually has trifoliate leaves which are usually smaller than this species and often darker green like *M. simplex*, not yellow/green as in *M. ternata*. Hybrid seedling may be more difficult to separate from this species.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Kermadec, Three Kings, North and South Islands.

HABITAT

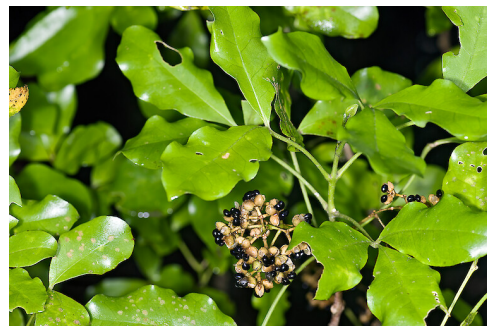
Coastal to lowland forest, often favouring margin habitat.

GENUS

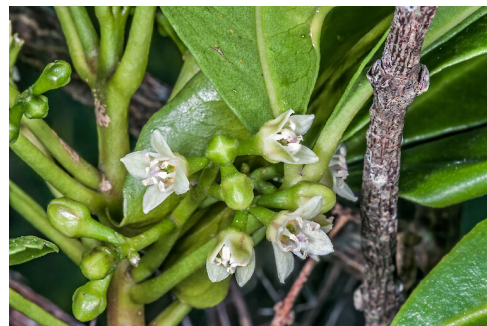
Melicope

FAMILY

Rutaceae



Mature fruit. Lower Hutt, Hutt River Trail near Belmont. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 27/03/2011, Licence: CC BY.



Lower Hutt, Hutt River trail near Belmont. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 29/07/2012, Licence: CC BY.

AUTHORITY

Melicope ternata A.Cunn.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Where both species of Melicope co-exist hybrids may occur, these historically have been referred to as *M. mantelli*, they should be called *M. ternata* x *M. simplex*.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September - October

FRUITING

October – February (-April)

ETYMOLOGY

melicope: Honey cut

ternata: Triplets

NVS CODE

MELTER

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 36

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 Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, DPS, DPT, 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.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsida, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted by M. Ward from Allan (1961).

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/melicope-ternata/>

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