

Melicytus chathamicus

COMMON NAME

Chatham Island mahoe

SYNONYMS

Hymenanthera latifolia var. chathamica F.Muell., Hymenanthera chathamica (F.Muell.) Kirk

FAMILY

Violaceae

AUTHORITY

Melicytus chathamicus (F.Muell.) Garn.-Jones

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Trees & Shrubs

NVS CODE

MELCHA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 32

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

2004 | Range Restricted

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Small tree bearing oval toothed leaves which have the veins much more visible on the underside inhabiting the Chatham Islands. Leaves 5-13cm long by 2-5cm wide, teeth or margin more obvious towards the tip. Flowers small. Fruit small, white flecked purple or entirely dark purple.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to the Chatham Islands. Present on Chatham (Rekohu), Pitt, South East (Rangitira), Mangere and Little Mangere Islands

HABITAT

A common component of coastal forests, occurring on fertile ground in bush remnants and in coastal scrub.

FEATURES

A tree that grows up to 8 m tall and has pale bark. The leaves are up to 12 cm long, leathery, lance-shaped and toothed, with either pale green or bright red leaf stalks. The tiny flowers can be seen in spring, while the fruit are white berries speckled with purple, which have been recorded from September to April. Male and female flowers occur in separate plants.



Dunedin Botanic Garden. Photographer: John Barkla



Cultivated (October). Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

FLOWERING

Spring.

FRUITING

September - April

THREATS

Browsing animals can prevent regeneration and long exposure of forest remnants to grazing has commonly resulted in the loss of this species from the forest.

ETYMOLOGY

melicytus: From the Greek meli (honey) and kytos (hollow container), referring to the staminal nectaries of the flowers. Literally "honey-cave"

chathamicus: From the Chathams

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

Recorded growing in the wild in the Awarua Ecological District in Southland, presumably from garden escapes.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/melicytus-chathamicus/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/melicytus-chathamicus/>