

Melicytus flexuosus

SYNONYMS

Hymenanthera angustifolia R.Br auct. non. of N.Z. authors, Hymenanthera dentata R.Br. auct. non. of N.Z. authors, Hymenanthera dentata var. angustifolia (R.Br.) Benth. auct. non. of N.Z. authors, Melicytus angustifolius (R.Br.) Garn.-Jones auct. non. of N.Z. authors.

FAMILY

Violaceae

AUTHORITY

Melicytus flexuosus Molloy et A.P.Druce

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

MELFLE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 32

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, RF

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD, RF

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RF, CD

2004 | Gradual Decline

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Greyish widely branched tangled shrub with speckled nearly leafless twigs in open sites. Sparse leaves occur on plants in the shade, 10–20 mm long by 1 mm wide, dark green. Flowers small, bell-shaped, sweetly perfumed, under branches. Fruit small, purple.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Waione Frost Flats and Pureora-Taihape region), South Island (widespread). The northern limit for this species occurs at Pureora in Waikato.

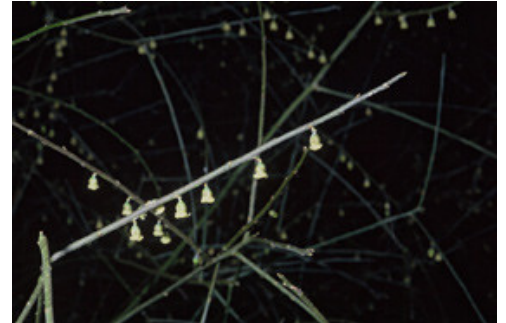
HABITAT

Fertile alluvial terraces and flood plains in sites prone to heavy frosts and summer drought; often on forest margins and amongst scrub in frosty hollows.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).



Flowering, Mataroa, near Taihape (November).
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Melicytus flexuosus juvenile plant.
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub to 5 metres tall, with interlaced, almost leafless, whip-like, grey-green branchlets. **Branchlet surfaces** pitted with lots of tiny white spots (lenticels). **Leaves** absent or 10–20 mm long, dark green to brown-green, entire or slightly toothed. **Seedlings** have narrow, brown leaves with a few coarse teeth or lobes along their leaf edges. **Flowers** strongly perfumed, pale yellow, c. 2–3 mm diameter. **Fruit** a berry, 3.5–5.0 mm diameter.

SIMILAR TAXA

None.

FLOWERING

August–November.

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Yellow

FRUITING

February–May.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Fresh seed, though slow to germinate, is usually the best way to grow this species. It can be grown from semi-hardwood and hardwood cuttings but these are often slow and the strike rate can be very variable.

THREATS

Habitat loss through development, particularly forestry and rural development, weed encroachment.

ETYMOLOGY

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

flexuosus: Torturous, winding

WHERE TO BUY

Rarely offered by specialist native plant nurseries and almost never by commercial nurseries. This is a shame because the almost leafless branches and divaricating shrub form, as well as its hardy nature and tolerance of a wide range of soils, climates and moisture regimes makes it an ideal plant for modern gardens.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

The New Zealand plant has frequently been associated with two Australian endemics, both now transferred to *Melicytus*, and known there as *M. angustifolius* and *M. dentatus* (R.Br.) Mabberly et Molloy respectively.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 August 2003. Description based on Molloy & Druce (1994).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Molloy BPJ, Druce AP. 1994. A new species name in *Melicytus* (Violaceae) from New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 32(2): 113–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1994.10410362>.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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