

Melicytus micranthus

COMMON NAMES

swamp māhoe. manakura

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons




SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Zig-zagging shrub with interlacing branches bearing small wavy-edged green leaves with a pale blotch at the base and that have the vein network more visible on the underside. Twigs fuzzy. Leaves 1.5-2.3cm long, in various shapes, widest at middle, scattered along stem. Flowers small, white. Fruit dark purple.

FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub up to 2 m. tall or occ. more; branches stiff ± interlaced; branchlets stiff, ± pubescent. Leaves sometimes fascicled; petioles slender 3-5- (10) mm. long, ± pubescent; lamina subcoriaceous, 1-2.5 × 1-2 cm., elliptic- to obovate-oblong to broad-ovate, sinuate to subcrenate, sometimes subentire. Flowers minute, axillary, solitary or 2-3 together; pedicels ± pubescent;  with short ± ciliate rounded calyx-lobes; petals oblong, twice length of calyx; anthers broad, sessile; connective flat.  calyx and petals as in ; style short, stout; stigma discoid, 3-5-lobed. Berry 3-4 mm. diam., obovoid to subglobose, dark purple; seeds (1)-4. Flowers: October - April. Fruit: November to May.

SIMILAR TAXA

Similar to juvenile kaikōmako (*Pennantia corymbosa*) and distinguished by the prominent terminal lobes of leaf; often there are only two other squarish lobes, one on either side of the leaf, giving it a characteristic appearance that has been likened to webbed ducks feet. Small-leaved milk tree-tūrepo (*Streblus heterophyllus*) has distinctive juvenile foliage with deep notches, mostly near the base of the leaf, on at least some leaves, and fine serrations round the rest of the leaf margin. *Raukaua anomalus* is also similar but has a dark (rather the white) blotch at leaf base.

DISTRIBUTION

North and South Islands. Local in Eastern Canterbury, rare in Westland.

HABITAT

Lowland forest, scrub and forest margins, especially on drier sites and on alluvial ground.

GENUS

Melicytus

FAMILY

Violaceae

AUTHORITY

Melicytus micranthus (Hook.f.) Hook.f.



Hauraki plains, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Hauraki plains, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SYNONYMS

Elaeodendron micranthum Hook.f., *Melicytus micranthus* Hook.f., *Melicytus micranthus* Hook.f. var. *micranthus*, *Melicytus microphyllus* Colenso, *Melicytus micranthus* var. *microphyllus* (Colenso) Cheeseman

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Melicytus micranthus var. *longiusculus* Cheeseman is based on the hybrid combination *M. micranthus* x *M. ramiflorus* and is thus not a synonym of *M. micranthus*. Type locality: Neslon.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for April 2019](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

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

micranthus: Small flower

NVS CODE

MELMIC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 96

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: DPS, DPT, PF, RR, 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.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NR, Sp Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the [“Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025”](#) Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H. H. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. 1. Wellington: Government Printer. Pg. 425-426.

Wilson, H & Galloway, T. 1993. Small-leaved shrubs of NZ. Manuka Press, Christchurch.

ATTRIBUTION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026