

Meryta sinclairii

COMMON NAME

pukanui, puka

SYNONYMS

Botryodendrum sinclairii Hook.f.

FAMILY

Araliaceae

AUTHORITY

Meryta sinclairii (Hook.f.) Seem

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

MERSIN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 48

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Small tree bearing very large glossy wavy leaves inhabiting the three Kings Islands (but common in cultivation and introduced to the Hen and Chickens Islands). Twigs fleshy. Leaves up to 50cm long, on stalks to 35cm long, tough. Fruit in clusters at tip of branches under the leaves, purple.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Three Kings Islands. It is probably planted on the Chickens near Whangarei

HABITAT

Coastal forest, grassland and scrub. With the exception of the taller kanuka (*Kunzea* aff. *ericoides* (f)) dominated forest of Great island, *Meryta* is the dominant tree species on the Three Kings Islands.



Cultivated, November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Cultivated, November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tree up to c.8 m tall, with trunk up to c.50 diameter; branches brittle. Leaves crowded at apices of branchlets, simple, on petioles up to c.350 mm long; lamina about oblong, semicordate at base, coriaceous, glossy, up to c.500 ~ 200 mm; margins very shallowly broadly lobulate, slightly undulate. Panicles terminal, erect, up to 50 mm long, about oblong in outline, branches jointed in bracted clusters; calyx obsolete, petals 4-5, greenish; stamens 4, bracted, crowded; calyx obsolete, staminodes present, style-branches 4-5. Fruit 10 mm or more long, succulent, black, 4-5-loculed; seeds solitary in each locule.

SIMILAR TAXA

None

FLOWERING

August - April

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

FRUITING

Throughout the Year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

An extremely attractive and popular tree widely cultivated in northern New Zealand. Easily grown from fresh seed which often germinates beneath the parent tree. However, prone to phytophthora and verticillium wilt for which there is no available treatment. Best grown in a coastal situation, in free draining soil.

THREATS

A Naturally Uncommon, range-restricted endemic. It is abundant in the wild on all the main islands and a few of the larger islets of the Three Kings group. However, this situation could easily change if soil borne fungal pathogens current absent from the islands are introduced - this is a constant threat because marijuana growers are increasingly using remote offshore islands to grow their crops, and their crops carry these diseases. Further, should rodents invade the islands then the *Meryta* along with many other plants and animals unique to the islands will be under certain risk. The future of these islands is ensured only by regular visits checking for rodents and weeds, undertaken by the New Zealand Department of Conservation.

ETYMOLOGY

meryta: Rolled up

sinclairii: After Sinclair (c. 1796–1861). Colonial Secretary and naturalist.

ATTRIBUTION

Description from Allan (1961)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Government Printer, Wellington.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/meryta-sinclairii/>