

Metrosideros bartlettii

COMMON NAMES

rātā moehau, Bartlett's rātā

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, RR, RF

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Forest tree (up to 30 m tall). Bark grey-white to white, spongy, tissue-like, and readily flaking. Emergent leaves yellow-green, mature leaves dark green, margins distinctly hairy. Inflorescences white.

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tree up to 30 m with a trunk up to 1.5 m diameter, often initially epiphytic on trees or tree ferns; bark pale grey to whitish, spongy, separating into soft flakes, shedding freely; young twigs dark red, 4-angled to rounded and with long-persistent, white spreading hairs. Leaves on petioles 4–5 × 1 mm, lamina 30–50 × 15–26 mm, elliptic to ovate, base cuneate, apex acute to attenuate, often twisted; young leaves pale green to yellow-green, somewhat glossy, petioles, margins and midribs pubescent, with the hairs tending to persist on midribs and petioles; mature leaves dark green above pale beneath, upper surface glossy, veins evident, lower surface glossy, entire vein network evident, oil glands obscure, midrib raised below, impressed above. Inflorescences with 3–4 pairs of cymules, ± densely tomentose, tomentum of spreading white hairs; bracts and bracteoles shedding early during inflorescence maturation; peduncles up to 9 × 1 mm. Flowers white; pedicels up to 3 × 1 mm; hypanthium 2.5–3.0 × 2.0–2.5 mm; sepals triangular, spreading, 1.0–1.5 × 1.0–1.5 mm; petals elliptic to ovate, 2.5–3.0 × 1.8–2.0 mm; stamens 5–9 mm long; style 10–11 mm long. Fruit hypanthium puberulent, 2.0–2.5 × 2.5–3.0 mm, sepals persistent, deflexed, capsules exserted for 1.5–2.5 mm. Seeds pale orange-yellow, 2.3–3.0 mm long, narrowly elliptic to narrowly oblong, straight or slightly curved.

SIMILAR TAXA

Bartlett's rata could only be confused with northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*) from which it can immediately be distinguished by the acute tipped rather than notched leaves. The flowers of northern rata are red or yellow, never white, and the capsule valves of that species never protrude beyond the calyx rim. No other New Zealand *Metrosideros* has such easily detached, white, tissue-paper-like bark.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island, Northland, Te Pahi, where it is only known from three forest remnants near Spirits Bay. These are Radar Bush, Kohuronaki and Unuwahao Bush.



Metrosideros bartlettii tree, Radar Bush, Te Pahi. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Metrosideros bartlettii specimen, flowering in cultivation. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

HABITAT

An emergent or canopy tree of northern coastal and lowland broad-leaved forest. Usually starting life as an epiphyte on puriri (*Vitex lucens*), taraire (*Beilschimedia tarairi*), rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*) and tree ferns (*Cyathea* spp.). Occasional specimens have been found growing terrestrially on rock outcrops, boulders and cliff faces.

THREATS

As of 2015 there were 13 adult rata moehau left in the wild (down from the 34 known in 1992). Three trees occur on private land where they are isolated from other specimens. There is negligible viable seed set because there is not an abundance of nectar-feeding birds to pollinate the flowers and Bartlett's rata is self-incompatible. There are now only five genotypes left in the wild, only one of which is widespread in cultivation. Aside from these problems, the species is at severe risk from browsing animals, fire and myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*). Rata moehau also supports two endemic liverworts, *Frullania wairua* and *Siphonolejeunea raharaha-nehemiae*, which are also now at severe risk of extinction.

Myrtle Rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) is an invasive fungus which threatens native myrtle species - learn more myrtlerust.org.nz

GENUS

Metrosideros

FAMILY

Myrtaceae

AUTHORITY

Metrosideros bartlettii J.W.Dawson

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October – November

FRUITING

March - April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Can also be grown by hardwood cuttings but these can be slow to take root. Plants have proved tolerant of a wide range of conditions, and have survived mild frosts and even snow falls. However specimens do best in open, sunny sites within well drained, fertile soils.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for January 2006](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

metrosideros: Iron heart

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to the Myrtaceae of New Zealand](#)

NVS CODE

METBAR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, RR, RF

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, RR

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, RR

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Dawson, J.W. 1985: *Metrosideros bartlettii* (Myrtaceae) a new species from North Cape, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 23: 607–610.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (30 September 2003). Description adapted from Dawson (1985) supplemented with observations made from herbarium and fresh material.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/metrosideros-bartlettii/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026