

Metrosideros colensoi

COMMON NAME

rātā

SYNONYMS

Metrosideros pendens Colenso, *Metrosideros colensoi* Hook.f. var. *colensoi*, *Metrosideros colensoi* var. *pendens* (Colenso) Kirk

FAMILY

Myrtaceae

AUTHORITY

Metrosideros colensoi Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

METCOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2018 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, De

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Woody long-climbing vine. Adult branches pendent. Adult leaves green, finely hairy, close-set and overlapping, sharp-tipped, surfaces without any obvious glandular spotting. Flowers terminal, fluffy, white or pink.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (from central Northland south), South Island (Nelson and Marlborough to Westland and southern Marlborough / North Canterbury (Napenape)

HABITAT

Lowland to montane forest (particularly a vine seen in riparian and alluvial forest). Especially common in limestone areas on rock outcrops, in gorges, cliff faces and around cave entrances.



Oct 2006. Photographer: Peter de Lange



Oct 2006. Photographer: Peter de Lange

FEATURES

Slender to very slender vine up to 10 m tall. Bark grey to pale grey, ± tessellated, and flaking in tabular shards. Initial stems sparingly branched but soon much-branched, widely spreading, apices trailing and pendent. Branchlets subterete, pilose-pubescent (indument in mixtures or fine, short and long pilose brownish hairs). Leaves not markedly dimorphic, close-set to overlapping (± imbricate), submembranous to subcoriaceous, petiolate, ± subsessile; petioles 1-3 mm long, subterete; juvenile lamina 4-10 × 2-8 mm, ovate-lanceolate, base cuneate to almost truncate, apex acute to acuminate, initially yellow-green, adaxially maturing to green, abaxially paler, both surfaces finely covered in minute oil glands, and initially densely pubescent, ± glabrescent; adult lamina 8-20 × 5-20 mm, otherwise similar. Inflorescences terminal and lateral, white (rarely pink), comprising small, few-flowered cymes; peduncles and pedicels pubescent, peduncles 10-30 mm long, pedicels up to 3 mm long; hypanthia 5 mm long, narrowly-urceolate or -subglobose to ± funnelform, pubescent, hypanthium rim exceeding disc, calyx lobes 1.5-2.0 mm long, narrow deltoid, acute to acuminate, initially forward projecting, spreading with age. Petals 1.5-2.2 × 1.5-2.2 mm, orbicular, not or only scarcely exceeding calyx lobes. Stamens numerous, filaments 8-12 mm long, anthers yellow. Style 10-14 mm long, stigma capitate. Capsule 4-6 mm diameter, narrowly urceolate to subglobose, externally 3-ribbed, 3-valved. Seeds 0.6-1.1 mm long, narrowly elliptic, narrowly obovate or oblong, apex usually curved orange to orange-brown, unfilled seeds dark orange-brown.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

SIMILAR TAXA

Readily distinguished from other similar small, white-flowered rata (*Metrosideros diffusa* and *M. perforata*) by the widely spreading, pendant branches, softly hairy, close-set, overlapping, ovate-lanceolate, acute to acuminate leaves (without obvious oil glands) and terminal, white to pink inflorescences.

FLOWERING

August to October

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

FRUITING

December - April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Although a beautiful species, *M. colensoi* is not commonly cultivated and it has a reputation for being difficult. Like all other climbing rata it can be grown from rooted pieces and from semi-hardwood cuttings. However like all *Metrosideros* cuttings can be fickle to strike. This species, once established is very hardy and tolerant of a range of conditions. The long drooping (pendent) branches and terminal clusters of white fluffy flowers are especially attractive when specimens are planted to grow up a wall or along a fence.

THREATS

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

ETYMOLOGY

metrosideros: Iron heart

colensoi: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (6 January 2013). Description from herbarium specimens and fresh material.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Metrosideros colensoi* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

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

MORE INFORMATION

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