Metrosideros parkinsonii

COMMON NAME
Parkinson’s rātā

FAMILY
Myrtaceae

AUTHORITY
Metrosideros parkinsonii Buchanan

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE
METPAR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 22

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2018 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Much branched shrub or small tree. Trunks 1 or more. Branches erect. Leaves almost clasping stems, dark green to yellow green above, paler beneath, thick, leathery, pointed, surfaces often blistered and blemished red. Flowers crimson, fluffy produced directly from branches, and often hidden by vegetative growth.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North and South Islands. In the North Island known only from Hauturu (Little Barrier Island) and Aotea Island (Great Barrier Island). In the South Island confined to the western side where it is locally common from Mt Burnett (near Collingwood) south to just north of Hokitika.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane forest. usually along ridgelines in peaty ground. In the North Island confined to montane “cloud” forest, usually in wind-pruned forest, scrubland and on the margins of cliff faces or surmounting rock outcrops.
FEATURES
Shrub to small spindly tree up to 10 m tall. Multi-trunked, trunks up to 60 mm d.b.h.. Bark pale grey, flaking in small tabular shards. Branches few to many, erect, Branchlets square in cross-section, 4-angled, glabrous, initially dark red, maturing brown-grey to grey. Emergent vegetative buds pink or red-tinted. Leaves coriaceous, glabrous, adaxially dark green to green, abaxially paler, oil glands minute, scarcely evident to naked eye (except abaxially) petiolate; petioles almost wanting 2.2-3.0 mm. long; lamina 25-75 × 15-30 mm, ovate-lanceolate, base truncate to subamplexicaul, apex usually abruptly narrowed, to an obtuse or subacute tip. Inflorescences cauliflorous, borne in compound, sometimes leafy cymose botryia, mostly below main vegetative branches. Flowers up to 8 per cyme, crimson. Hypanthium turbinate, margins exceeding disc, calyx lobes ovate-triangular. Ovary trilocular. Capsules 3-valved, 6-8 mm long, brown-grey to grey, subglobose to globose. Petals caducous, 5 × 5 mm, suborbicular to oblong, margins finely denticulate or subentire; stamens numerous, filaments 20-28 mm long, anthers yellow, style 23-30 mm long, narrowly obovate, straight, rarely curved toward apices, orange, unfilled seeds similar but darker in colour.

SIMILAR TAXA
Easily recognised by the shrub of small-tree, multi-trunked growth habit, often with spindly branches, shortly petiolate, ovate-lanceolate leaves, cauliforous flowering habit, and crimson flowers.

FLOWERING
September - December

FLOWER COLOURS
Red/Pink

FRUITING
January - April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Although a beautiful species, M. parkinsonii is difficult to maintain in cultivation, with even well established plants suddenly dying. While it can be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings these are difficult to strike. This species seems to do best planted in a damp, humus-enriched soil in a semi-shaded site.

THREATS
Not Threatened. However, outside its north western South Island haunts it is only known from two small populations on Aotea Island (Great Barrier Island) and Hauturu (Little Barrier Island) where it is very uncommon. On Aotea some trees have been damaged by tracking up Mt Hirakimata (Mt Hobson). In the South Island, like all rata species, M. parkinsonii is impacted upon by possums. Myrtle Rust (Austropuccinia psidii) is an invasive fungus which threatens native myrtle species - learn more myrtlerust.org.nz

ETYMOLOGY
metrosideros: Iron heart

WHERE TO BUY
Occasionally offered by specialist native plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (8 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 parkinsonii Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/metrosideros-parkinsonii/ (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION