

Metrosideros parkinsonii

COMMON NAMES

Parkinson's rātā

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED 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.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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-tinged. **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 botyria, 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, stigma capitate. **Seeds** 1.2–2.0 mm long, narrowly obtriangular, narrowly elliptic to narrowly obovate, straight, rarely curved toward apices, orange, unfilled seeds similar but darker in colour.

SIMILAR TAXA

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

DISTRIBUTION

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



Metrosideros parkinsonii. Photographer: Hamish Dean, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Charleston, West Coast. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 14/02/2014, Licence: CC BY-NC.

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 rock outcrops.

THREATS

Outside its north-western South Island range, *Metrosideros parkinsonii* is only known from two small populations on Great Barrier Island (Aotea Island) and Te-Hauturu-o-Toi / Little Barrier Island, where it is very uncommon. Some trees on Aotea Island have been damaged by tracking up Mt Hirakimata (Mt Hobson). In the South Island, like all rātā species, *M. parkinsonii* is impacted upon by possums.

When myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) was detected in New Zealand (May 2017) the conservation status was upgraded as a precautionary measure to ‘Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable’ because, on best advice, it was believed that no indigenous Myrtaceae had resistance to myrtle rust disease (de Lange et al. 2018).

Myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) is an invasive fungus that threatens native myrtle species. Learn more myrtlerust.org.nz.

GENUS

Metrosideros

FAMILY

Myrtaceae

AUTHORITY

Metrosideros parkinsonii Buchanan

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September–December

FRUITING

January–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Although a beautiful species, *Metrosideros 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.

CULTIVATION

Occasionally offered by specialist native plant nurseries.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for May 2013](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

metrosideros: Iron heart

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

METPAR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPT, NR, 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.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange PJ, Rolfe JR, Barkla JW, Courtney SP, Champion PD, Perrie LR, Beadel SM, Ford KA, Breitwieser I, Schönberger I, Hindmarsh-Walls R, Heenan PB, Ladley K. 2018. Conservation status of New Zealand indigenous vascular plants, 2017. *New Zealand Threat Classification Series 22*. Department of Conservation, Wellington, NZ. 82 p. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/science-and-technical/nztcs22entire.pdf>.

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

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

MORE INFORMATION

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

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