Metrosideros perforata

COMMON NAMES
akatea

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Woody long-climbing vine. Mature plants only reproductive. Leaves more or less circular, dark green above, pale green below, both surfaces covered in fine glandular spots (especially evident on leaf undersides). Flowers white (rarely pink) in dense, terminal, fluffy, clusters.

Metrosideros perforata. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.

FLOWER COLOURS
White

Metrosideros perforata. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Vine up to 20 m (rarely more long). Growth dimorphic, juvenile and climbing vines sparingly branched, mature (adult reproductive state) heavily branched. **Bark** furrowed, dark grey to brown-black, ± tessellated, and flaking in tabular shards. **Branchlets** terete, ± invested in short dark brown setose hairs. **Leaves** close-set, coriaceous, glandular punctate (this especially evident on abaxial surface) subsessile; petioles 1.0–3.2 mm long, lamina 6–12 × 5–9 mm, broad-ovate, broad-oblong to suborbicular, obtuse, adaxially dark green, ± glabrous, abaxially very pale green; finely setose; margins recurved. **Inflorescences** in axillary few-flowered cymose botryia, these crowded towards apex of branchlets; peduncles and pedicels pubescent to setose; peduncles 10–40 mm long, pedicels 5–10 mm. **Hypanthium** broad-turbinate, initially fleshy, finely tomentose ± glabrescent; calyx lobes broadly deltoid, obtuse; petals caducous, 1.5–3.0 × 1.5–2.8 mm, suborbicular, white or pink; stamens numerous, 8–10 mm long, white (rarely pink). **Capsule** 4–5 mm diameter, 3-valved, subglobose, exserted, ± woody.

SIMILAR TAXA
Easily distinguished from all other indigenous *Metrosideros* by the small rounded "spotted" (glandular-punctate) leaves, which are dark green above and pale green below (the spotting is most evident on the leaf undersides), and by the dense clusters of white flowers. In its juvenile state it may be confused with juvenile vines of *Metrosideros carminea*. However, the young growth of *Metrosideros carminea* is distinctly pinkish and the leaf hairs are much longer and pink coloured. Despite the common name "white rata" *Metrosideros perforata* is not closely related to *Metrosideros albiflora*, which is a species virtually confined to northern New Zealand kauri (*Agathis australis*) forest, and which has much larger leaves (without obvious glandular spotting) and fewer, larger inflorescences.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: Manawatāwhi | Three Kings Islands, Te Ika-a-Māui | North Island, Te Waipounamu | South Island (to about northern Otago and northern Fiordland).

HABITAT
Coastal to montane (0-1100 m.a.s.l.). An abundant plant of open scrub, dense forest or rock-land. In forest and scrub situations climbing on other trees but also climbing up cliff faces, on rock outcrops, and forming a “shrubland” in loose talus

THREATS
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 the 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 perforata (J.R.Forst. et G.Forst.) A.Rich.

SYNONYMS
Leptospermum perforatum J.R.Forst. et G.Forst., Metrosideros scandens Sol. ex Gaertn.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
November–March

FRUITING
February–May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from rooted pieces. Can be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings. However like all Metrosideros cuttings can be fickle to strike. A tough, resilient rata suitable for open situations and once established tolerant of drought and moderate frost.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACU: Facultative Upland
Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
metrosideros: Iron heart
perforata: From the Latin perforatus ‘pierced with holes’, depending on the species this may refer to the foliage covered in punctate oil glands

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY
Key to the Myrtaceae of New Zealand

NVS CODE
METPER

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 At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT 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.
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (5 January 2013). Description based on fresh material.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/metrosideros-perforata/

PDF DATE

27 May 2026