

# Metrosideros umbellata

## COMMON NAME

Southern rata

## SYNONYMS

Melaleuca lucida G.Forst., Metrosideros lucida (G.Forst.) A.Rich.

## FAMILY

Myrtaceae

## AUTHORITY

Metrosideros umbellata Cav.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## NVS CODE

METUMB

## 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

Tall forest tree bearing pairs of oval leathery leaves with a and masses of red bristly flowers in summer inhabiting much of the South Island and some upland North Island sites. Twigs rounded in cross section. Leaves 2.5-6cm long by 1-2cm wide, gradually narrowing to sharp tip and short stalk.

## DISTRIBUTION

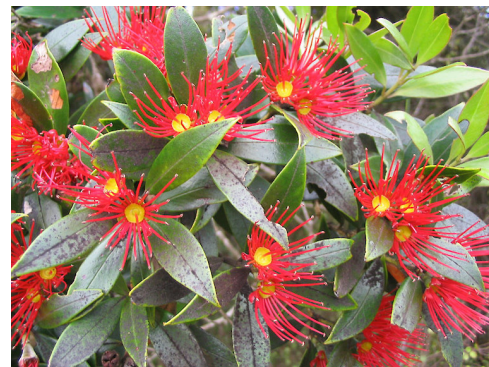
Endemic. North, South, Stewart and Auckland Islands. In the North Island locally present from Te Paki south to Mt Pirongia, the northern Kaimai Ranges (Ngatamahinerua) and Mt Manuoha (Te Urewera National Park). In the South Island from Durville Island south and to Fiordland, with a mainly westerly distribution (absent from Marlborough), most of Canterbury and northern Otago. Common on Stewart and the Auckland Islands.

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed but inclined to be rather slow-growing unless planted in ideal conditions. In cultivation this species prefers a moist soil. Can be grown from soft-wood and semi-hardwood cuttings but these can be very difficult to strike. A beautiful specimen tree which should be more widely planted in locations where conditions are suitable.



Metrosideros umbellata, Pounaweia.  
Photographer: John Barkla



Close up of Metrosideros umbellata flowers.  
Photographer: DoC

## THREATS

Threat status elevated in 2017 due to the risk of Myrtle rust. Rather uncommon in the North Island, and at some sites it is locally threatened by possum browse.

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

## ETYMOLOGY

**metrosideros:** Iron heart

**umbellata:** Bearing flowers in umbels

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

North Island plants are genetically (based on nrDNA ITS sequences) distinct from South Island plants but the differences cannot be matched to morphology. All recent southern rata collections made from the Tararua Ranges are the hybrid *M. robusta* x *M. umbellata* (Gardner et al. 2004). A few photographs taken in the 1930s from the Francis Ridge, Southern Tararua Ranges may have been genuine *M. umbellata* but the species cannot be found there now. Other northern Tararua records of *M. umbellata* appear to be based on *M. robusta*.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Beddie, A.D. 1953. Root behaviour in *Metrosideros*. Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin, 26: 2-6

de Lange, P.J. 1994. Southern rata *Metrosideros umbellata* confirmed from Mt Pirongia Western Waikato. Auckland Botanical Society Journal, 49: 57-59.

Druce, A.P. 1959. Southern rata in the Tararuas. Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin, 31: 12-15

Gardner, R.C.; de Lange, P.J.; Bowala, T.; Brown, H.A.; Keeling, J.; Wright, S.D. 2004: A Quaternary phylogeography for New Zealand inferred from chloroplast DNA haplotypes in *Metrosideros* (Myrtaceae). *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society* 83: 399-412.

## CITATION

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

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

## MORE INFORMATION

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