Myrsine chathamica

COMMON NAME
Chatham Island matipo, Chatham Island mapou

SYNONYMS
Suttonia chathamica (F.Muell.) Mez, Rapanea chathamica (F.Muell.) W.R.B.Oliv.

FAMILY
Primulaceae

AUTHORITY
Myrsine chathamica F.Muell.

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE
MYRCHA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 46

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Bushy small tree bearing dark green leathery leaves which often has small curled scales below the new growth inhabiting the Chatham and Stewart Islands. New growth hairy. Leaves 2-7.5cm long, those on juveniles much broader (to 120mm wide). Fruit glossy deep purple, arranged along twig.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. Abundant on the Chatham Islands, occasional on some islands and headlands of Stewart Island and the Foveaux Strait
HABITAT
On the Chatham Islands matipo (Myrsine chathamica) is an important forest species ranging from coastal sites to the table lands. Near the coast it often forms the dominant forest cover on limestone and schist outcrops, and it is tolerant of kopi (Corynocarpus laevigatus) so mixed kopi-matipo forests are commonly seen. It is less commonly found in the sand country except where sand dunes abut limestone or schist outcrops. In swamp forest it can be locally dominant and is also a major component of the forest cover on the peaty soils of the tablelands. On Stewart and the adjoining Foveaux Strait islands it forms only a minor component of the mixed coastal forest cover seen in these areas.

FEATURES
Stout, densely branched, gynodioecious, spreading tree up to 12 m tall (rarely decumbent forming sprawling patches up to 5 m diameter). Trunk up to 0.20 m dbh; usually multi-trunked or branched from near base, often bearing numerous root suckers and epicormic growth in exposed conditions; bark dark red-brown, brown or grey-brown, firm (not flaking). Branches numerous, initially upright, then spreading, often twisted, lenticellate; branchlets yellow-green to orange-green, lenticellate, initially clad in 0.2-0.35 mm long, stiff, patent to erecto-patent hairs becoming glabrous with age. Leaves alternate, coriaceous, glabrous, adaxially glossy dark green to green, abaxially paler oil-glands numerous, minute (scarcely evident adaxially, more so abaxially); petioles 5-10 mm long, rather rigid and somewhat fleshy when fresh, finely covered in 0.2-0.35 mm long, stiff hairs. Lamina 20-75(-120) × 15-40(-80) mm, flat, dish-shaped or recurved along margins, obovate, elliptic, broad-elliptic, apex emarginate or obtuse, margins entire. somewhath thicker than rest of lamina. Inflorescence in dense (1-)3-5(-10)-flowered fascicles. Flowers greenish yellow, pale yellow, or cream, and then spotted dark red or maroon, or wine-red spotted purple-black pedicels 4.6-7.2 mm long in fruit. Pistillate flowers: calyx 1.8-2.2 mm, tube 0.3-0.76 mm, lobes 4(-5), erecto-patent, 0.8-1.1 x 0.6-0.8 mm, oblanceolate, apex acute to subacute, margins ciliolate; corolla 2.6-3.0 mm, tube 0.34-0.38 mm, lobes 4(-5), 2.0-2.4 x 1.0 mm, elliptic to elliptic-oblong, margins densely ciliolate, cilia white, apex rounded or obtruse. Antherodes malformed, 0.42-6.0 x 0.3-0.4 mm, apiculus recurved or absent; pollen absent. Ovary 1.8 x 2.3 mm, ellipsoid. Stigma sessile, 2.2 mm diameter, tholiform. Bisexual flowers: calyx 1.6-2.0 mm, tube 0.22-0.70 mm, lobes 4(-5), 0.6-0.9 x 0.6-0.9 mm, deltoid, margins minutely ciliolate, cilia white. Corolla 3.0-4.3 mm, tube 0.3-0.6 mm, lobes 4(-5), 2.8-4.2 x 1.4-2.0 mm, oblong-elliptic, elliptic, margins densely ciliolate, cilia white, apex obtuse to subacute. Anthers 1.9-2.1 x 0.9-1.2 mm, apiculus upright; pollen white. Ovary rudimentary or functional, if functional then 1.2-2.0 mm long. ellipsoid. Stigma sessile 2 mm diameter, tholiform. Drupe (5-)8-10 mm diameter, violet to purple, often white-spotted, globose. Endocarp 5.5-7.0 × 5.3-6.5 mm, circular or broadly elliptic, orange to light brown, surface smooth or slightly irregular, often longitudinal veins. Endocarp description adapted from Webb & Simpson (2001).

SIMILAR TAXA
On the Chatham Islands Myrsine chathamica is distinctive, it scarcely resembles M. coxii with which it often grows on the southern tablelands. Myrsine coxii branches are fastigiatey arranged (i.e. like a pitch fork) and it has much smaller yellow-green or dark green inrolled, oval to oblong with emarginate apices or obcordate leaves. In New Zealand, the large, dark green, coriaceous, obovate, elliptic, broad-elliptic, often dish-shaped emarginate leaves with their entire margins are distinctive and serve to distinguish it from all other Myrsine with which it grows.

FLOWERING
September - October

FLOWER COLOURS
Green, Yellow

FRUITING
July - February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed, root suckers and cuttings made of epicormic growth and/or semi-hardwood cuttings. Myrsine chathamica is very hardy and moderately fast growing though it will not tolerate drought conditions of high humidity. It is an excellent hedge plant especially in the more southerly coastal parts of the New Zealand.

THREATS
Not Threatened. However, Myrsine chathamica is uncommon on Stewart Island.
ETYMOLOGY
myrsine: Myrrh
chathamica: From the Chatham Islands

NOTES
On the Chatham Islands Myrsine chathamica occasionally hybridises with Myrsine coxii.

ATTRIBUTION

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION
Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Myrsine chathamica Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myrsine-chathamica/ (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION