

Myrsine oliveri

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Bushy shrub with yellowish green or dark green wavy leaves that sometimes have teeth along the upper edge and inhabiting the Three Kings Islands. Leaves 5-6.5cm long by 3-4cm wide. Fruit 5-7mm wide, wider than deep.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Yellow



A plant in cultivation (September).

Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Great Island. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub or (rarely) a small gynodioecious tree up to 5m tall. Trunk 0.1-0.15 m dbh; usually solitary rarely multi-trunked or branching from near base, root suckers absent; epicormic growth infrequent; bark smooth, firm (not flaking), dark brown to red-brown or grey-brown, usually clean of lichens and bryophyte growth. Branches upright to shortly spreading, flexible, sparsely lenticellate; branchlets leafy, flexible, initially wine-red or pink, finely pubescent, maturing red-brown and glabrous. Leaves alternate, coriaceous, glabrous except for midrib and leaf margin which at least initially is finely pubescent, adaxially glossy dark green, yellow-green to green tinged pink (rarely sparingly spotted with red), abaxially similar but paler, oil glands numerous, minute (scarcely evident) colourless or flushed pink; midrib light green or yellow-green, slightly raised adaxially, prominently so abaxially, venation evident in fresh and dried material; petioles 5-10 mm long, stout, somewhat fleshy when fresh, dark pink, maroon or purple-black. Lamina (30-)50-65(-100) × (15-)30-40(-55) mm, obovate, elliptic to broadly cuneiform, apex rounded (if so then usually weakly emarginate) or subacute, base cuneately narrowed or attenuate; margins distinctly thickened, often slightly recurved, entire or with upper third of lamina irregularly dentate (juvenile leaves similar but smaller and with entire length of lamina margin regularly dentate). Inflorescence in densely 3-5(-8)-flowered, axillary, cymose fascicles (rarely solitary). Flowers pale yellow flushed with pink, sometimes spotted red, pedicels of flowers 1.8-2.2(-3.0) mm long, pinkish green, stout, glabrous, elongating slightly at fruiting. Pistillate flowers: calyx 1.6-2.0 mm, tube 0.5-0.8 mm, lobes (4-)5, erecto-patent, 0.6-0.9 × 0.2-0.5 mm, deltoid, margins finely ciliolate, cilia pinkish; corolla 2.4-3.0 mm, tube 0.4-0.6 mm, lobes 4, erecto-patent to spreading (if spreading then with apices strongly decurved at anthesis), 2.3-3.0 × 1.3-1.4 mm, elliptic to elliptic-oblong, margins finely ciliolate, cilia pinkish, apex rounded or obtuse. Antherodes malformed, 0.45-5.8 × 0.3-0.4 mm, apiculus recurved, pollen absent. Ovary 2.0 × 2.4 mm long, ellipsoid. Stigma subsessile to sessile, 2.2-2.8 mm diameter, capitate, ± globular. Staminate flowers: calyx 1.8-2.2 mm, tube 0.65-0.8 mm, lobes 4, erecto-patent, 0.8-1.1 × 0.4-0.6 mm, deltoid, margins finely ciliolate, cilia pinkish; corolla 2.8-3.6 mm, tube 0.45-0.8 mm, lobes (4-)5, spreading (with apices strongly decurved at anthesis), 2.6-3.8 × 1.6-1.9 mm, elliptic to elliptic-oblong, margins fimbriate, pinkish, apex rounded or obtuse. Stamens (4-)5, filaments 2.2-2.8 × 0.22-0.30 mm, pinkish, stamens yellow, apiculus recurved. Ovary absent or rudimentary, malformed. Bisexual flowers: calyx 1.7-2.0 mm, tube 0.34-0.7 mm, lobes 5, erecto-patent, 0.6-0.9 × 0.2-0.5 mm, deltoid, margins fimbriate, pinkish; corolla 2.42-2.8 mm, tube 0.4-0.6 mm, lobes 5, spreading (with apices strongly decurved at anthesis), 2.3-2.9 × 1.2-1.31 mm, elliptic, margins fimbriate, cilia pinkish, apex rounded or obtuse. Stamens (4-)5, filaments 2.2-2.8 × 0.22-0.30 mm, pinkish, stamens yellow, apiculus recurved. Ovary 2.0 × 2.4 mm long, ellipsoid. Stigma subsessile to sessile, 2.2-2.8 mm diameter, capitate, ± globular. Drupe 1-seeded, 5.0-8.1 mm diameter, subturbinate-globose to globose, violet to purple-black, sometimes white spotted. Endocarp 3.0-4.0 × 5.0-6.0 mm, subturbinate-globose to globose, pale brown, surface irregular with pale longitudinal veins.

SIMILAR TAXA

Myrsine oliveri is readily distinguished from the only other *Myrsine* present on the Three Kings, *M. australis* by its very much larger obovate, elliptic to broadly cuneiform, glossy dark green, yellow-green to green tinged pink (rarely sparingly spotted with red) leaves. *Myrsine oliveri* is perhaps most similar to *M. kermadecensis*, from which it differs by its more consistently toothed, and more highly coloured leaves, and by floral and fruit characters.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to the Three Kings Islands, where it is known from Manawa Tawhi (Great Island), South West and West Islands.

HABITAT

Coastal forest and shrubland.

THREATS

Once believed close to extinction this species has made a spectacular recovery and is now abundant on Manawa Tahwi (Great Island), and it is actively spreading to the other adjacent islands. It is listed only because it occupies a small geographic area.

GENUS

Myrsine

FAMILY

Primulaceae

AUTHORITY

Myrsine oliveri Allan

SYNONYMS

Suttonia dentata W.R.B.Oliv., Rapanea dentata (W.R.B.Oliv.) W.R.B.Oliv.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

July - September

FRUITING

October - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Can be grown from hardwood cuttings. Frost sensitive but otherwise rather hardy. In cultivation usually rather rapidly growing. The foliage is rather attractively coloured.

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ETYMOLOGY

myrsine: Myrrh

NVS CODE

MYROLI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 46

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL, IE

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 11 February 2011. Original description by P.J. de Lange.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Myrsine oliveri Fact Sheet (content continuously updated).

New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myrsine-oliveri/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/myrsine-oliveri/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026