

Neomyrtus pedunculata

COMMON NAME

Rohutu

SYNONYMS

Myrtus pedunculata Hook.f., *Eugenia vitis-idaea* Raoul, *Myrtus vitis-idaea* (Raoul) Druce, *Neomyrtus vitis-idaea* (Raoul) Burret

FAMILY

Myrtaceae

AUTHORITY

Neomyrtus pedunculata (Hook.f.) Allan

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Trees & Shrubs

NVS CODE

NEOPED

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2018 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Wide-angled shrub with long pale twigs that are square in cross-section bearing small pale green oval leaves that are paler underneath and bright orange fruit hanging on a long stalk. Bark pale, smooth. Leaves dotted, 6-20mm long by 4-15mm wide. Flowers white, with many projecting filaments from the centre.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North, South and Stewart Islands from near Kaitaia (Mangamuka) south but generally scarce in Northland and Auckland.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane forest and shrubland. Often a conspicuous component of the understorey of lowland Podocarp riparian forest but also an frequent component of grey scrub in some parts of the South Island. Unless flowering or fruiting *Neomyrtus* is often overlooked or mistaken for the superficially similar *Lophomyrtus obcordata* with which it often grows.



Neomyrtus pedunculata. Photographer: Keir Morse



Grebe valley, Fiordland, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

FEATURES

Shrub or small tree up to 8 m tall. Trunk slender, c.0.1 m dbh. Bark pale-grey to almost silvery, chartaceous, flaking in small irregular shards. Branches few to many, upright to spreading, often openly branched. Branchlets glabrous, 4-angled, rather brittle, either sparse and so openly branched or densely and then compactly interwoven. Brachyblasts usually sparingly leafy except toward actively growing apices. Leaves opposite, coriaceous, glandular punctate, oil glands colourless, leaf lamina and petiole decurrent with branchlet; petioles 3-6 mm long, somewhat brittle; lamina 6-15(-20) × 4-10(-15) mm, obovate-oblong to obovate, adaxially glabrous, silvery green, pale green to yellow-green, red to purple-black spotted, abaxially pale silvery green to white, glabrescent (initially finely hairy, hairs sericeous, ± finely appressed, caducous). Flowers 5-merous, in axillary, usually solitary (rarely paired) monads, borne on slender, 10-15(-20) mm long pedicels. Hypanthium subturbinate, not extending beyond ovary summit, calyx lobes 5, persistent, deltoid, spreading. Petals 5-8(-10) × 6-9 mm, orbicular, white, margins entire to slightly irregular, oil glands colourless. Stamens 40-60(-80), free, in 3-4 (or more) weakly defined whorls, filaments 5-9 mm long, anthers cream, basifixed, latrorse. Ovary unilocular, weakly septate, ovules borne on 2 parietal placentas. Style 8-10 mm long, slender, white, stigma capitate, scarcely dilated. Fruit a broadly ovoid, yellow, orange or red 6-8 mm long berry. Seeds 1-7(-11) varying in shape depending on number of seeds present per berry, mostly reniform, 1.5-2.5 mm diameter, testa brown, glossy smooth and very hard.

FLOWERING

November - April

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, White

FRUITING

February - June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Can also be grown from semi-hardwood and hardwood cuttings though the strike rate can be variable. *Neomyrtus* is an attractive and remarkably hard shrub that does well when planted in a semi-shaded site, in a free draining, moist, fertile soil enriched with leaf litter and compost. It is however, rather drought tolerant and can (once established) be grown in high light situations. It is surprisingly drought tolerant. On account of its conspicuous flowers and colourful berries it is a very attractive plant that is well worth growing. *Neomyrtus* is, however, rarely available from garden centres.

THREATS

The arrival of myrtle rust in NZ puts this plant at serious risk.

ETYMOLOGY

pedunculata: Flowers stalked

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 9 February 2011. Seed description which is modified from Webb & Simpson (2001). Status updated by C C Ogle 25.10.19, following <https://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/science-and-technical/nztcs22entire.pdf>

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Webb, C.J.; Simpson, M.J.A. 2001: *Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons*. Christchurch, Manuka Press.

CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/neomyrtus-pedunculata/>