

Nestegis cunninghamii

COMMON NAME

Black maire

SYNONYMS

Olea cunninghamii Hook.f., *Gymnelaea cunninghamii* (Hook.f.)
L.A.S.Johnson

FAMILY

Oleaceae

AUTHORITY

Nestegis cunninghamii (Hook.f.) L.A.S.Johnson

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

NESCUN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 46

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Large tree bearing pairs of dark green wavy leaves that underneath are pale green and with the network of veins visible. Bark square-patterned. Leaves 7-15cm long by 1.5-4.5cm wide, juvenile leaves long and very thin. Fruit red, 10-15mm long, containing a single hard seed.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North, South, Hauturu (Little Barrier) and Aotea (Great Barrier) Islands. Scarce north of Auckland and often uncommon over wide parts of its former lowland range due to it being preferentially logged by early settlers. In the North Island Black Maire is now most commonly seen in the main Axial Ranges and Central Volcanic Plateau. In the South Island extending to Napenape in the east and near Greymouth in the west.



Nestegis cunninghamii - close up of upper leaf surface. Photographer: Peter de Lange



Nestegis cunninghamii - leaf underside showing distinctive venation. Photographer: Peter de Lange

HABITAT

Widespread in coastal to montane forest. Often prominent in riparian Podocarp forest and on the Podocarp forests developed on the ignimbrite and pumice country of the Central Volcanic Plateau. As a rule Black Maire seems to prefer more frost prone habitats than White Maire (*Nestegis lanceolata*) though both species often grow together. Black maire is also common host for white mistletoe (*Tupeia antarctica*) in the Central Volcanic Plateau, Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa.

FEATURES

Stout gynodioecious spreading tree up to 25 m tall usually forming a broadly domed canopy; trunk up to 1.5m diameter, sometimes with several arising from base, usually straight and arching, sometimes twisted; bark firm (not flaking), grey-brown to dark brown, tessellated. Branches spreading, branchlets minutely pubescent. Leaves glabrous, coriaceous, dark green to brown-green above, ± dull, paler beneath, margins plane, entire with prominent raised midrib and side veins, borne on rigidly stout petioles 9-10(-15) mm long; lamina of juveniles 100-300 × 5-10 mm, narrow-linear, apex acute, base cuneately narrowed or attenuate; adult lamina 150-400(-600) × 20-40 mm, lanceolate to ovate- or elliptic-lanceolate, obtuse or subacute, coriaceous, weakly bullate and somewhat rough to touch; midrib and side veins impressed above (prominent below). Inflorescence a stout 8-12(-20)-flowered raceme 10-25 mm long; rhachis and pedicels densely pubescent. Male flowers with 2 large exerted anthers, ovary mostly rudimentary (occasionally functional); female flower with 2 sessile barren anthers, ovary with large 2-lobed stigma. Drupe 15-20 mm long, ovoid, flesh red, orange-red to purple-black; endocarp 10-18 × 6-9 mm, dull, pale orange-yellow, narrowly elliptic, elliptic to broadly elliptic, terete (sometimes weakly compressed). Seed purple-brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from the other three New Zealand species by the long, broadly lanceolate leaves with dark green slightly bullate upper surfaces and pale green undersides; by the entire leaf margins; and by the conspicuous leaf venation so evident on the leaf under surfaces. The inflorescences of *Nestegis cunninghamii* are also pubescent while those of the other three indigenous species are usually glabrous, or if pubescent then minutely and sparsely so. The juvenile foliage of *Nestegis cunninghamii* is very similar to *N. lanceolata* but differs by its dull rather than glossy adaxial surface. The mature branches of *N. cunninghamii* are consistently minutely pubescent those of the other species are either glabrous or sparsely puberulent.

FLOWERING

October - November

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, White

FRUITING

December - April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Difficult from cuttings. Black Maire deserves to be more widely grown as it makes an excellent specimen or street tree and once established is remarkably drought and cold tolerant. The fruit is avidly eaten by many birds especially kereru (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*).

ETYMOLOGY

cunninghamii: Named after Allan Cunningham (1791 – 1839) who was an English botanist and explorer, primarily known for his travels to Australia (New South Wales) and New Zealand to collect plants. Author of *Florae Insularum Novae Zelandiae Precursor*, 1837-40 (Introduction to the flora of New Zealand).

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for the NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 9 February 2011. Description adapted from Allan (1961) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: *Flora of New Zealand*. Vol. I, Wellington, Government Printer.

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/nestegis-cunninghamii/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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