

Olearia fragrantissima

COMMON NAME

Fragrant tree daisy

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Olearia fragrantissima Petrie

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Trees & Shrubs

NVS CODE

OLEFRA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 108

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: PD

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD, PD

2004 | Sparse

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Small bushy shrub with many erect reddish brown zig-zagging twigs and sweet smelling small flowers inhabiting coastal areas from Banks Peninsula to Invercargill. Leaves 7.5-30mm long by 5-10mm wide, pointed, hairy when young. Flowers yellow, in small tight clusters. Seeds fuzzy.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic, eastern and south-eastern South Island from Banks Peninsula to Southland.

HABITAT

coastal to lower montane (0-300 m a.s.l.) usually in grey scrub, on forest margins or shrublands. Sometimes on the margins of estuarine or saltmarsh vegetation in places which would be subject to saline water in extremes of tide, also found on gravelly soils often on the margins of steep gullies, gorges and in boulder field.



Heyward Point, Dunedin. Photographer: John Barkla



Olearia fragrantissima. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

FEATURES

Small semi-deciduous tree up to 8 m tall. Trunk stout, up to 0.6 m d.b.h., clad in greyish-brown bark, this long persistent peeling in long flaking strips. Branches dark reddish brown ascending to spreading; branchlets reddish-brown to red, rigidly wiry, flexuous (often zig-zagging), interlacing, striate. Petioles up to 3 mm long, red-brown. Leaves alternate, 7.5-40 x 5-15 mm, yellow-green to bright green, elliptic-oblong, elliptic-ovate or broad-ovate to obovate, apex obtuse to acute, base cuneate to attenuate; lamina membranous, upper surface glabrate to glabrous when mature, undersides clad in soft, white tomentum, margins flat, entire. Inflorescences axillary (never terminal) in sessile to subsessile glomerules up to 20 mm diameter, each bearing up to 12 bracteate capitula. Capitula 2-4 mm diameter, strongly fragrant (especially at night); involucre bracts bi- to triseriate, oblong under sides copiously white-tomentose; florets 4-8, pale yellow to orange-yellow, ray-florets 1.5-2 x 1.5-2 mm, pale yellow. Cypselas 2 mm long, slightly compressed, grooved, finely and sparsely pilose hairy; pappus 2-3 mm long, pale yellow to buff.

SIMILAR TAXA

Olearia hectorii Hook.f. is somewhat similar but this species has opposite, broadly-elliptic, grey-green leaves that are finely hairy on both surfaces. It usually forms a much larger tree (up to 10 m tall), has distinctive deeply furrowed, long persistent grey to greyish-white bark, and branchlets are never flexuous and interlacing. In lowland areas *Olearia hectorii* tends to grow on poorly drained alluvial soils.

FLOWERING

October - February

FLOWER COLOURS

Orange, Yellow

FRUITING

November - April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from semi-hardwood cuttings that are best taken in autumn and held in a cold frame, and from fresh seed (seed has short-term viability). Seed responds well to 5-10 days cold treatment prior to sowing. An attractive shrub or small tree for the garden. Very tolerant of a range of conditions and once established drought tolerant. The deliciously apricot-peach scented flowers are rather notable and unique to this species.

THREATS

A rather widespread species which can be locally common but is more usually sparsely distributed over large parts of its known range. Although threatened in some areas this species does seem to be recruiting naturally at many locations and populations tend to have good age class structure.

ETYMOLOGY

olearia: Named after Johann Gottfried Olearius, a 17th-century German scholar, writer of hymns and author of *Specimen Florae Hallensis*

fragrantissima: Deliciously scented

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally sold by specialist native plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for the NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2006. Description adapted from Heads (1998).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Heads, M. 1998. Biodiversity in the New Zealand divaricating tree daisies: *Olearia* sect. nov. (Compositae). *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 127(3): 239-285.

CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/olearia-fragrantissima/>