Peraxilla tetrapetala

COMMON NAMES
Red mistletoe, pikirangi, pirita, roeroe, pirinoa

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Fleshy shrub to 3m wide growing on inner branches of beech trees with glossy green fleshy paired leaves and masses of red tubular flowers. Leaves to 2.5cm long, blistered, diamond shaped. Flowers to 4cm long. Fallen petals litter forest floor under plants. Fruit green.

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FLOWER COLOURS
Red/Pink

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
A shrub that can grow up to 2 m across. It usually parasitises close to the trunk of its host. It has characteristic small raised blisters or lesions on small, usually rhombic leaves. The flowers are solitary or 2-4 together and are bright red (up to 40 mm long). The ripe fruit is fleshy and green. Veins on the leaves are hardly evident and only the midrib is conspicuous. Leaf tips are never notched. Host trees are typically beech or Quintinia.

SIMILAR TAXA
Peraxilla colensoi, Ileostylus micranthus. Peraxilla tetrapetala has leaves mostly oblong or diamond-shaped, with blister galls, 1-3 flowers per flower cluster and dull green fruit. It grows on black and mountain beech. P. colensoi is generally larger, has 3-10 flowers per flower cluster, wider leaves, no blisters and bright yellow fruit and usually grows on silver beech. Ileostylus micranthus has green flowers and does not parasitise beech.

DISTRIBUTION
North and South Island, but less common in the North Island.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane. A hemiparasite whose main hosts are mountain beech (N. solandri var. cliffortioides), black beech (Nothofagus solandri var. solandri), red beech (N. fusca), and silver beech (N. menziesii). However, it has been recorded as a parasite on a further 17 species (2 exotic) including puriri (Vitex luceans) and pohutukawa (Metrosideros excelsa).

THREATS
A wide variety of threats are now acknowledged as working in unison to cause the national decline of this and allied leafy mistletoes species. The most obvious threat seems to be brush tailed possums (Trichosurus vulpecula), which heavily browse mistletoes, to such an extent that they are held as the primary cause for the loss of the beech mistletoes from large parts of the countries beech forest.

GENUS
Peraxilla

FAMILY
Loranthaceae

AUTHORITY
Peraxilla tetrapetala (L.f.) Tiegh.

SYNONYMS
Elytranthe tetrapetala (L.f.) Engl., Loranthus tetrapetalus L.f., Loranthus decussatus Kirk

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October to January

FRUITING
April to June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Can be grown from fresh seed placed on suitable host tissue (ideally Nothofagus solandri var. cliffortioides). Although seed germinates readily the ability of the seedling to form a firm host is rather variable. Failure rates are high and experimentation with plenty of fresh seed is usually needed.

ETYMOLOGY
tetrapetala: Four winged

NVS CODE
PERTET

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2 n= 24

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD
2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD
2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD
2004 | Gradual Decline
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, DPS, PF, RR, Rel Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, DPS, DPT, PD, Sp Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Simpson, M.J.A. 1976. *Elytranthe* in the vicinity of Nelson Lakes National Park. Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin, 39: 39-40
Urlich, S., Hopkins, C.J., Thompson, T. 2007. The survival of Peraxilla mistletoes in the Tararua Range. Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin, 50: 37-47

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/peraxilla-tetrapetala/

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25 May 2026