

Peraxilla tetrapetala

COMMON NAME

Red mistletoe, pikirangi, pirita, roeroe, pirinoa

SYNONYMS

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

FAMILY

Loranthaceae

AUTHORITY

Peraxilla tetrapetala (L.f.) Tiegh.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

PERTET

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2 n= 24

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD

2004 | Gradual Decline

BRIEF 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.

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 luceana*) and pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*).

FEATURES

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.



Photographer: Cathy Jones



A photo by John Smith-Dodsworth.
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

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.

FLOWERING

October to January

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink

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.

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.

ETYMOLOGY

tetrapetala: Four winged

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ATTRIBUTION

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

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

Ulrich, S., Hopkins, C.J., Thompson, T. 2007. The survival of *Peraxilla* mistletoes in the Tararua Range. Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin, 50: 37-47

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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