

Pittosporum huttonianum

COMMON NAMES

Hutton's kōhūhū

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Small tree with silvery fuzzy young parts and dark green shiny leathery leaves that are paler underneath and 1.5-2cm wide capsules. Flowers red, with silvery fuzzy base. fruit splitting into three to show the black seeds in a yellowish pith.

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Violet/Purple

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Gynodioecious, small, broad crowned trees up to 10 m tall. Trunk stout, grey-black to brown, lenticillate. Branches spreading. Branchlets dark brown, at first covered with floccose white, white-grey to faintly fulvous tomentum, glabrate. leaves alternate, crowded toward branchlet apices. Petioles 5-15 x 1-3 mm, at first covered with appressed white tomentum, soon glabrate. Leaf buds copiously covered with white, white-grey or faintly fulvous tomentum. Lamina 40-120 x 20-60 mm, dark green above paler beneath, elliptic-oblong, obovate-oblong, apex and base acute to obtuse, margins entire, undulate or revolute emergent leaves copiously covered with white, floccose tomentum, soon glabrate. Flowers terminal, axillary or solitary, usually in (1-)2-4-flowered fascicles; pedicels up to 20 mm long, accrescent in fruit, white-tomentose, usually subtended by 1 or more cataphylls and 2-10 mm long, caducous, tomentulose or glabrous bud scales. Sepals 6-9 x 2-3 mm, oblong, acute, outer surface covered with floccose white tomentum, inner glabrous. Petals 12-18 x 3-4.5 mm, red, magenta, purple or white, oblanceolate, linear-oblanceolate, obtuse to subacute, free from base, recurved from about the middle; stamens 6-10 mm, anthers 1.5-4.5 x 0.8-1.5 mm. Ovary 2.5-5 x 1-3.5 mm, copiously white-tomentose; style 2-5.5 mm long, stigma capitate or truncate. Capsules 12-20 mm diameter, (2-)3-valved, trigonous, apiculate, coriaceous to woody, at first white-tomentose soon glabrate, somewhat rugose. Mucilage orange to orange-red. Seeds 16-25, reddish-black to black, of irregular shape.

SIMILAR TAXA

By and large a well marked species, distinguished from other New Zealand large-leaved *Pittosporum* by the elliptic-oblong, obovate-oblong leaves, and capsules which are initially rather generously covered in distinctive white to fulvous floccose tomentum. However, it grades into *P. ellipticum* around the Karangahake Gorge, where the chief distinction is the presence (sparsely in this area) of floccose white - fulvous rather than rust-brown tomentum. In the western Waikato it appears to grade into *P. colensoi* Hook.f., from which, again the chief difference is the copious floccose tomentum, which is otherwise absent in the sparsely hairy leaves of *P. tenuifolium* subsp. *colensoi*. Also the latter entity is a more upright tree, while *P. huttonianum* tends to have a broader, more spreading crown. In some areas the distinction is rather arbitrary caused perhaps by hybridism. Further study into the matter is desired.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island, Great Barrier Island, and the Coromandel Peninsula to about the Karangahake Gorge in the east. Also present from Te Akau south to about the Tawarau Forest in the western Waikato.



Kauaeranga valley, November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

HABITAT

Coastal to lower montane (1-700 m a.s.l.). Common in regenerating forest, or along ridge lines, on cliff tops, along slip scars, rock tors and in limestone country fringing razorbacks and dolines (tomo) shafts. Rarely as a sparse understorey component of mature forest.

GENUS

Pittosporum

FAMILY

Pittosporaceae

AUTHORITY

Pittosporum huttonianum Kirk

SYNONYMS

Pittosporum huttonianum Kirk var. huttonianum, Pittosporum huttonianum var. fasciatum Kirk

TAXONOMIC NOTES

In parts of its range this species appears to grade with *P. colensoi* and *P. tenuifolium*. Many botanists informally regard *P. huttonianum* as a subspecies of *P. tenuifolium*. Further research into its status, perhaps by using an appropriate range of molecular markers might clarify its status. NZPCN retain the species because for most of its range it is a well marked species and in that range it is often sympatric with *P. tenuifolium*.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October - November

FRUITING

November - October (fruit present throughout the year)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. An attractive small tree for a small garden. Rather tolerant of a range of conditions.

ETYMOLOGY

pittosporum: Pitch seed

NVS CODE

PITHUT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 24

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, NStr, PF, TL 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.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Cooper, R.C. 1956: The Australian and New Zealand species of *Pittosporum*. *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden* 43: 87-188

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 30 August 2006. Description adapted from Cooper (1956).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pittosporum-huttonianum/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026