Pittosporum tenuifolium

COMMON NAMES
kohukohu, kōhūhū, black matipo

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses



Bartons Bush, Trentham, Upper Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 28/09/2005, Licence: CC BY.



Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 29/04/2020, Licence: CC BY.

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Small tree with very dark twigs bearing pale green shiny wavy thin leaves and very dark flowers and 12 mm wide capsules that split into two or three to show the black sticky seeds. Leaves usually 2–4 cm long.

FLOWER COLOURS
Black, Red/Pink

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Shrub or small gynodioecious tree up to 10 m tall (usually much less). Trunk 0.3–0.4(–0.6) m diam., stout, clad in dark grey-black or brown persistent bark. Branches numerous, erect then spreading. Branchlets and young leaves pubescent, hairs pale yellow or cream. Petioles short, somewhat fleshy. Leaves alternate, (10–)30(–70) x (5–)10(–20) mm, leathery, pale-green to dark green above, lighter below, oblong, oblong-ovate or elliptic-obovate, apex obtuse to acute, rarely acuminate, margins entire, often undulose. Flowers solitary or in axillary cymes, rather fragrant, especially at night. Pedicels stout, pale green, fleshy, bracts entire, lanceolate, caducous. Sepals narrowly ovate-oblong, subacute to obtuse, silky hairy. Petals 12 mm long, lanceolate, dark red, black (rarely yellow or white). Capsules 2-valved (rarely 3), subglobose, valves woody, black when mature, long persistent. Seeds immersed in sticky, red or yellow viscid pulp.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic and widespread throughout country.

HABITAT
A small tree of coastal to montane shrubland and forested habitats. Preferring successional habitats.

GENUS
Pittosporum

FAMILY
Pittosporaceae

AUTHORITY
Pittosporum tenuifolium Sol. ex Gaertn.

SYNONYMS
Trichilia monophylla Richard, Pittosporum fasciculatum Hook.f., Pittosporum tenuifolium subsp. fasciculatum (Hook.f.) Kirk, Pittosporum tenuifolium var. fasciculatum (Hook.f.) Kirk, Pittosporum colensoi var. fasciculatum (Hook.f.) Cheeseman, Pittosporum tenuifolium Sol. ex Gaertn. subsp. tenuifolium

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–November (–December)

FRUITING
January - March

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easy from fresh seed. Can be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACU: Facultative Upland
Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION
Very common in cultivation. Kohuhu and cultivars are commonly sold by commercial nurseries and are also grown throughout the world.

ETYMOLOGY
pittosporum: Pitch seed
tenuifolium: Thin leaf

NVS CODE
PITTEN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 24

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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 Not Threatened 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
Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Wellington, Government Printer

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 10 January 2004. Description adapted from Allan (1961).
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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pittosporum-tenuifolium/

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