Pittosporum umbellatum

COMMON NAMES
haekaro

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Small tree bearing flat smooth glossy green oval leaves and clusters of small pinkish or red flowers with a pale body on long stalks and 1.5cm wide capsules that split into two to show the black sticky seeds. Leaves 5-10cm long, ridged along upper surface.

At Coromandel, October. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Pittosporum umbellatum immature fruits. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FLOWER COLOURS
Cream, Red/Pink

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Small trees 3-12 m tall; branchlets greyish-brown to grey, young branchlets sparsely brown-tomentose soon glabrate. Leaves subverticillate, dark green adaxially, paler beneath, glabrous, coriaceous, margins thin, flat or slightly undulate, brown-pilose when young, thickened, revolute and glabrate when mature, nerves raised on both surfaces, usually brown to white-tomentose near base, secondary veins 8-15 per side, anastomosing, obscure above, distinct beneath. Juvenile leaves obovate to lanceolate, entire, occasionally crenate, sometimes deeply lobed or pinnatifid; adult leaves elliptic to oblong-lanceolate, entire, rarely crenate, acute or acuminate at apex, acute or attenuate at base, 25-100 x 15-50 mm, petioles 6-122 x 1-2 mm, brown-tomentose when young, glabrate. Inflorescences terminal, sometimes becoming lateral, umbellate, umbels up to 20-flowered; pedicels 4-25 mm long, accrescent in fruit, brown-tomentose, subtended by an approximate whorl of leaves and numerous caducous, glabrous, ciliate bud scales up to 12 mm long. Sepals slightly imbricate at base, lanceolate, acute to acuminate, 4.5-9.0 x 1.5-3.0 mm, sparsely ciliate; petals linear-oblong, subacute to obtuse, 11.0-12.5 x 2.5-5.0 mm, loosely coherent at the base, spreading from above the middle, dull red, pink, cream, white or yellow; stamens 4-8 mm long, anthers sagittiform to elliptic-oblong, 1.0-3.0 x 0.6-1.3 mm. Pistil at anthesis slightly shorter or longer than the stamens; ovary 2.5-3.5 x 1.0-3.0 mm, villous; style 3-4 mm; stigma capitate, obscurely 4-lobed or truncate. Capsules tetragonous or 4-lobed, 2(-3)-valved, 7-12 mm diameter, green to black, sparsely pubescent; valves concave in transverse section, < 1 mm thick, rim distinctly thickened, coriaceous; seeds 9-14 black, irregular.

SIMILAR TAXA
Easily recognised by the prescence of fine brown tomentum on the young branchlets (with the mature branchlets glabrous); leathery, glabrate, leaves up to 100 mm long, mostly 2-valved, tetragonous, deeply furrowed capsules and flowers which vary between plants from deep red through pink, cream and white to completely yellow.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (North Cape to about Waihi, Tuhua (Mayor Island). Also locally near East Cape and Gisborne)

HABITAT
Coastal forest and scrub. Often on offshore islands and rock stacks. Occasionally in lowland forest.

GENUS
Pittosporum

FAMILY
Pittosporaceae

AUTHORITY
Pittosporum umbellatum Banks et Sol. ex Gaertn.

SYNONYMS
Pittosporum umbellatum Banks et Sol. ex Gaertn. var. umbellatum, Pittosporum umbellatum var. cordatum Kirk

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
August - October

FRUITING
Throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed. Can be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings. Seed germination is often variable and this species although easily grown by some can be difficult for others. Probably some selection of suitable forms from the wild is needed

ETYMOLOGY
pittosporum: Pitch seed
umbellatum: Bearing umbels

NVS CODE
PITUMB

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 At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, PF 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

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Pittosporum umbellatum Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pittosporum-umbellatum/ (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

27 May 2026