

Podocarpus totara var. totara

COMMON NAME

Totara

SYNONYMS

Podocarpus totara G.Benn. ex D.Don

FAMILY

Podocarpaceae

AUTHORITY

Podocarpus totara G.Benn. ex D.Don var. totara

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Gymnosperms

NVS CODE

PODTOT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 34

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Common throughout most of the North and South Islands. Present but extremely scarce on Stewart Island (Freshwater River).

HABITAT

Widespread and at times abundant tree of lowland, montane and lower subalpine forest. May also form a vegetation type in which it is the dominant species.

FEATURES

Robust dioecious conifer up to 30 m tall. Trunk stout, 2-3 m diam., clad in thick, corky, furrowed and somewhat stringy reddish-grey bark. Trunk without branches at base, branches stout, erect to spreading. Leaf bud narrower than or the same diam., as branchlet, surrounded by caducous, papery, narrowly lanceolate bracts. Leaves brownish-green, erect, leathery; juvenile 20 x 1-2 mm, adults 15-30 x 3-4 mm., linear-lanceolate, acute, apex pungent, mid-vein distinct to obscure. Male cones (strobili) axillary 10-15 mm, solitary or in 4s. Female branchlets axillary, ovules solitary or paired, receptacle of 2-4 scales, acute and free at tips, maturing as a red, swollen, succulent, sweet tasting "fruit" this surmounted by a 1(-2) broadly elliptic, ovoid-oblong 3-6 mm, semi-glossy, buff, grey nut brown, henna or dark brown (green to glaucous-green) when fresh, seed.



Podocarpus totara var. totara. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Totara foliage. Photographer: DoC

SIMILAR TAXA

Most frequently confused with *Podocarpus laetus* with which it may co-occur and with which it frequently hybridises. From that species *P. totara* var. *totara* can be distinguished by its thicker bark, less pungent leaf tips, and most readily by the leaf bud which is the same diameter as the branchlet, and by the narrower, lanceolate bracts surrounding the emergent leaves. See also Gardner (1990) in references below.

FLOWERING

(August-) October (-December)

FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

FRUITING

Fruits take a year or so to ripen, and may be found throughout the year, usually peaking at about the same time that cones are produced. They are most frequently seen between April and May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and hard-wood cuttings.

THREATS

Not Threatened, though as a vegetation type it is all but extinct throughout most of its former range.

ETYMOLOGY

podocarpus: Foot or stalk fruit

totara: After the Maori name, totara

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE

The distinctive red, somewhat oily wood was the timber of preference for use by Maori for constructing canoes (waka), and carvings. The stringy bark was harvested to make bags in which to hold preserved birds.

ATTRIBUTION

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

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Gardner, R. 1990. Totara and Halls totara. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal*, 45:27-28.

Moorfield, J. C. (2005). *Te aka : Maori-English, English-Maori dictionary and index*. Pearson Longman: Auckland, N.Z.

Landcare Research. Nga Tipu Whakaoranga - Maori Plant Use Database.

<http://maoriplantuse.landcareresearch.co.nz/WebForms/default.aspx>

CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/podocarpus-totara-var-totara/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/podocarpus-totara-var-totara/>