**Podocarpus totara var. totara**

**COMMON NAME**
tōtara

**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.

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

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION
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MORE INFORMATION