Podocarpus totara var. waihoensis

COMMON NAME
tōtara, Westland tōtara

SYNONYMS
None

FAMILY
Podocarpaceae

AUTHORITY
Podocarpus totara var. waihoensis Wardle

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Gymnosperms

NVS CODE
PODTVW

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 34

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. Confined to the West Coast of the South Island, from about the Waiho River south to the Cascades.

HABITAT
Common in riparian and alluvial forest on poorly drained, flood-prone river terraces. Seemingly preferring recent soils overlying gravels.

FEATURES
Dioecious, suckering conifer up to 10-15 m tall. Usually multi-trunked from base with 2-3(-numerous) erect, stilt-like trunks. These stout, (0.2-)1-1.5 m diam., clad in firm, furrowed and somewhat stringy reddish-grey bark, branches stout, erect to somewhat spreading. Leaf bud narrower than or the same diam., as branchlet, surrounded by caducous, papery, narrowly lanceolate bracts. Leaves dark brownish-green to almost purple-brown, erect, leathery; 15-25 x 7-0.75-40 mm., linear, linear-lanceolate, acute to acuminate, apex pungent, mid-vein indistinct, stomatal lines obvious. Male cones (strobili) axillary 10-20 mm, solitary or in 4s. Female branchlets axillary, ovules solitary or paired, receptacle of 2-4 obtuse scales, somewhat subacute and free at tips, these maturing as a red, swollen, succulent, sweet tasting “fruit” 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
Believed to have arisen through introgressive hybridism (see Wardle 1972). Very close to Podocarpus acutifolius - one of its postulated parents, and deriving from that species the suckering root stock, multi-trunked (from base) growth-form, and narrower needle-like leaves. However, it differs from that species by its distinctive tree habit. From totara it differs by the suckering and multi-trunked habit, narrow-linear leaves, much slender branches.

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. However this variety is only known from the southern half of the West Coast.

ETYMOLOGY
podocarpus: Foot or stalk fruit
totara: After the Maori name, totara

WHERE TO BUY
Uncommon in cultivation. Not often seen in gardens and probably not commercially available.

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Podocarpus totara var. waihoensis rarely (if ever) makes a large forest tree. Some botanists consider that var. waihoensis should be elevated to species rank. However, hybrid swarms between P. acutifolius and P. totara in northern Westland are rather hard to distinguish from var. waihoensis. There is a need to find further critical defining characters before such a step could be seriously contemplated.

ATTRIBUTION

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION
Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): Podocarpus totara var. waihoensis Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/podocarpus-totara-var-waihoensis/ (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION