

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

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

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.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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 diameter, clad in firm, furrowed and somewhat stringy reddish-grey bark, branches stout, erect to somewhat spreading. **Leaf bud** narrower than or the same diameter as branchlet, surrounded by caducous, papery, narrowly lanceolate bracts. **Leaves** dark brownish-green to almost purple-brown, erect, leathery; 15–25 × 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.



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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 tōtara 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

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 January 2007. Description adapted from Wardle (1972) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Wardle P. 1972. *Podocarpus totara* var. *waihoensis* var. nov.: the result of introgressive hybridisation between *P. totara* and *P. acutifolius*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 10(1): 195–201.

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Webb CJ, Simpson MJA. 2001. *Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons*. Manuka Press, Christchurch. 428 p.

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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

MORE INFORMATION

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