

Prumnopitys taxifolia

COMMON NAME

mataī, black pine

SYNONYMS

Dacrydium taxifolium Banks et Solander ex D.Don in Lamb., *Dacrydium mai* A.Cunn., *D. mayi* Houtte. ex Gord., *Podocarpus matai* Lamb. Ex Hook.f., *Prumnopitys spicata* Kent in Veitch, *Stachycarpus spicatus* (Mirbel) Masters, *Podocarpus taxifolia*

FAMILY

Podocarpaceae

AUTHORITY

Prumnopitys taxifolia (D.Don) de Laub.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Gymnosperms

NVS CODE

PRUTAX

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 38

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North, South and Stewart Islands. Uncommon on Stewart Island.

HABITAT

Lowland forest. Often in drier climates, where it can dominate alluvial soils which are waterlogged/flooded in winter and dry in summer. Seems to prefer base-rich substrates and soils.

FEATURES

Dioecious conifer 25(-30) m tall. Trunk 1-2 m diam. Bark dark brown (almost black), falling in thick circular flakes, leaving a distinctive hammer-like scar patterning on trunk. Wood dark brown to rich yellow-brown, very hard. Juveniles filiramate, with distinctive, dark brown, slender, flexuous, divaricating branchlets. Leaves brown, pale yellow, or dirty white, 5-10 x 1-2 mm, linear-lanceolate, apex acute; adults dark green, somewhat glaucous above, glaucous below, 10-15 x 1-2 mm, subdistichous, linear, straight to subfalcate, obtuse, often apiculate. Male cones (strobili) in spikes, 30-50 mm long, with 10-30 cones per spike. Ovules on short axillary branches, 3-10 per 40 mm long spike. Fruit a fleshy, oily, aromatic, terpene-tasting, purple-black drupe with a glaucous bloom. Stone more or less circular (5.5-)6-8.5 mm diam., surface dull to semi-glossy, pale orange-yellow to light orange-yellow.



Photo of tree bark. Photographer: DoC



Whirinaki, May. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily recognised by the distinctive filiramulate divaricating juvenile to subadult growth form, charcoal grey hammered bark, dark green to glaucous adult foliage, spicate male cones, and by the ovoid, plum-coloured drupes.

FLOWERING

(October-) November - February

FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

FRUITING

Fruits take 12-18 months to mature. Ripe fruits may be found throughout the year.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Seed may take up to 2 years to germinate Can be grown from hard-wood cuttings but rather slow to strike.

THREATS

Not Threatened, although as a forest-type it has been greatly reduced through widespread logging. Very few intact examples of matai-dominated forest remain in the country.

ETYMOLOGY

prumnopitys: From the Greek prymnos 'hindmost' or 'stern' and pitys 'pine', referring to the location of the resin duct

WHERE TO BUY

Commonly cultivated and frequently sold by most commercial nurseries and outlets - usually from plants raised from seed, however some nurseries stock cutting grown plants raised from adult foliage, thus bypassing the filiramulate, divaricating juvenile growth-form. A very popular garden tree.

CULTURAL USE

Gum from the trunk is the basis for "Matai Beer", a deep, rich brew still made in some parts of the country. The dark, hard, durable timber is much sought after for floors and furniture.

ATTRIBUTION

Prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN, 3 February 2006. Description based on Allan (1961)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Government Printer, Wellington

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/prumnopitys-taxifolia/>