Prunus lusitanica

COMMON NAMES
Portugese laurel

BIOSTATUS
Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS
Not applicable

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

FLOWER COLOURS
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Large evergreen tree to 7 m high. Leaves more or less elliptic 70-140 by 25-60 mm, and on short petioles 15-25 mm long, more or less purplish. Leaves glossy above and below, with slightly impressed veins above, leaf margins finely toothed. Inflorescence a fairly dense raceme of 47-77 white flowers. Fruit 10-12 mm long, ovoid, smooth glossy purplish black.

SIMILAR TAXA
With P. laurocerasus, P. lusitanica is in the sub genus Laurocerasus (Cherry Laurels) these are distinguished from other prunus species by the evergreen leaves and pedicellate flowers. P lusitanica can be distinguished from P. laurocerasus by the crenate-serrate leaf margin, more or less purplish petioles and the leaves usually smaller than the racemes.

HABITAT
Terrestrial.

GENUS
Prunus

FAMILY
Rosaceae

AUTHORITY
Prunus lusitanica L.

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
November, December

FRUITING
March-May

YEAR NATURALISED
1988

ORIGIN
Spain, Portugal, Azores

Single, self-established tree in a canopy gap at Gordon Park Scenic Reserve, Whanganui. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 23/05/2025, Licence: Public domain.

Single, self-established tree in a canopy gap at Gordon Park Scenic Reserve, Whanganui. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 22/05/2025, Licence: Public domain.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
Ornamental

TOLERANCES
Young plants are shade tolerant.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Perennial. Reproduces by seed. Seed are spread by birds (Webb et al 1988).

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)
This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report here.

NVS CODE
PRULUS

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/prunus-lusitanica/

PDF DATE
25 May 2026