

Pseudopanax arboreus

COMMON NAME

Fivefinger, five finger, whauwhaupaku

SYNONYMS

Panax arboreus Murray, *Panax arboreus* Murray var. *arboreus*, *Neopanax arboreus* (Murray) Philipson var. *arboreus*, *Pseudopanax arboreus* (Murray) Philipson

FAMILY

Araliaceae

AUTHORITY

Pseudopanax arboreus (L.f.) Allan

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Trees & Shrubs

NVS CODE

PSEARB

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 48

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Small bushy tree with glossy green fleshy toothed leaves arranged in fans of 5 (occ. up to 7) leaflets. Fruit purple, in obvious clusters

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Widespread (though rare in Central Otago). North and South Islands

HABITAT

Coastal to montane (10-750 m a.s.l.). Moist broadleaf forest. Frequently epiphytic. A frequent component of secondary forest. Streamsides and forest margins.



Banks Peninsula. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison



Fivefinger. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

FEATURES

Us. Dioecious. Small multi-branched tree to 8 m tall, branches and branchlets brittle. Leaves alternate, leaflets 5-7 (us. 5), palmate. Petioles c. 15-20 cm long, sheathing branchlet at base. Petiolules c. 3-5 cm long, pale green. Leaflets obovate-oblong to oblong-cuneate, thinly coriaceous, coarsely serrate-dentate, acute or acuminate to obtuse; midveins and main lateral veins obvious above and below; terminal lamina 10-20 x 4-7 cm. Inflorescence and panicle, terminal, compound; flowers usually unisexual; 8-20 primary rays (branchlets), up to 10 cm long; 15-20 secondary rays; umbellules with 10-15 flowers in each. Calyx truncate or obscurely 5-toothed; flowers c. 5 mm diam., sweet-scented; petals 5, white to pink flushed, ovate to triangular, acute; stamens 5, obvious, filaments c. = petals; ovary 2-loculed, each containing 1(-2) ovules; style branches 2, spreading. Fruit fleshy, 5-8 mm diam., style branches retained on an apical disc, very dark purple, laterally compressed. Seeds 2(-3) per fruit, wrinkled, 3-6 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Similar to other *Pseudopanax* species, but has a greater number of leaflets borne on distinct petiolules. Vegetatively similar to *Schefflera digitata* (pate) which has thinner, finely serrate and larger leaflets with usually 7 leaflets per leaf.

FLOWERING

June to August

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

FRUITING

August to February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh, cleaned, seed

THREATS

Not Threatened. In places the petiolules of *Pseudopanax arboreus* (and other fleshy-leaved *Pseudopanax* species) are a conspicuous element of possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) diet and the forest floor can become littered with discarded leaflets.

ETYMOLOGY

pseudopanax: False cure

arboreus: From the Latin arbor 'tree', meaning tree-like

TAXONOMIC NOTES

This species was transferred back to *Neopanax* Allan by: Frodin, D.G.; Govaerts, R. 2003: World Checklist and Bibliography of Araliaceae, The Cromwell Press, European Union.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Allan (1961) and Webb and Simpson (2001).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961. Flora of NZ, Vol. I. Government Printer, Wellington

Webb, C.J. & Simpson, M.J.A. 2001. Seeds of NZ gymnosperms and dicotyledons. Manuka Press, Christchurch.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pseudopanax-arboreus/>