

Pseudopanax colensoi var. colensoi

COMMON NAMES

mountain fivefinger, three finger

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Small much-branched tree with 5 fleshy leaflets arranged fanwise on very short stems

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Us. dioecious. Small multi-branched tree to 8 m tall, branchlets fleshy brittle. Leaves alternate, leaflets (3-)5(-7), palmate, subsessile or on short petiolules. Petioles 5-20 cm long, sheathing branchlet at base and with small erect stipule. Petiolules absent or short, of terminal leaflet to 0-5-10-(15) mm long, shorter on lateral leaflets, pale green, reddish at base. Leaflets narrow-ovate to broadly elliptic-oblong, cuneately narrowing to petiolule, thinly coriaceous, coarsely serrate-dentate in upper 2/3 - 3/4, acute to obtuse; midrib obvious above and below, lateral veins obscure; darker shiny green above; terminal lamina 5-17 x 2-11 cm, lateral leaflets decreasing in size. Inflorescence a terminal umbel; c. 8 primary rays (branchlets); 10-12 secondary rays; umbellules with 5-10 flowers in each. Calyx truncate or obscurely 5-toothed; flowers c. 5 mm diam.; petals 5, cream or greenish, ovate to triangular, acute; ovary 2-loculed, each containing 1 ovules; style branches 2. Fruit fleshy, 4-6 mm diam., style branches retained on an apical disc, dark purple when ripe. Seeds 2 per fruit, shallowly wrinkled, 2.9-4.3 mm long, rounded.

SIMILAR TAXA

Often confused with *Pseudopanax arboreus*, which also has 5 leaflets, from this species it can be distinguished by its shorter petiolules (leaflet stalk) and the base of the leaflet gradually narrowing to petiolule. The other varieties of *Pseudopanax colensoi* are distinguished their number of leaflets and distribution. The presence of a range of forms of probable hybrid arrangement at some sites can make identification difficult at times.

DISTRIBUTION

Central North Island and Coromandel Range south to Banks Peninsula (and possibly Dunedin) on South Island east coast. Apparently absent from South Island West Coast. Plants with sessile leaflets from the Fiordland-Stewart Island area are often referred to *Pseudopanax colensoi* var. *fiordensis* Wardle

HABITAT

Montane to low alpine forest and scrub



Southern Taranua Range. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 15/09/2007, Licence: CC BY.



Dawson Falls, Egmont National Park. Jan 2012. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

GENUS

Pseudopanax

FAMILY

Araliaceae

AUTHORITY

Pseudopanax colensoi (Hook.f.) Philipson var. colensoi

SYNONYMS

Panax colensoi Hook.f., Pseudopanax colensoi (Hook.f.) Philipson, Pseudopanax colensoi var. fiordensis Wardle, Neopanax colensoi (Hook.f.) Allan, Nothopanax (Hook.f.) Seem.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Pseudopanax colensoi var. fiordensis remains poorly understood. It may yet prove distinct from P. colensoi s.s. but further study is required. Recently, Frodin, D.G. and Govaerts, R (2003: World Checklist and Bibliography of Araliaceae, The Cromwell Press, European Union) reinstated Neopanax based on molecular and morphological evidence. In their work they did not provide combinations of the varieties recognised by Peter Wardle in N. colensoi (as P. colensoi). So as to avoid potential confusion we retain Neopanax colensoi in Pseudopanax until this issue is rectified.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October-March

FRUITING

October-March

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

UPL: Obligate Upland
Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

pseudopanax: False cure
colensoi: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

NVS CODE

PSECVC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 48

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the [“Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland”](#) Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the [“Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025”](#) Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

Wardle, P. 1968. The taxonomy and distribution of the stipulate species of *Pseudopanax* in New Zealand. NZ J. Botany 6: 226-236

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

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Wardle (1968), Allan (1961), Webb and Simpson (2001).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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