

Pseudopanax ferox

COMMON NAME

fierce lancewood

SYNONYMS

Panax ferox Kirk

FAMILY

Araliaceae

AUTHORITY

Pseudopanax ferox Kirk

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

PSEFER

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 48

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: PD, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, RF

2004 | Sparse

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Small tree with a striking juvenile form consisting of down pointing roundish long narrow very tough leaves that have irregular blunt bumps along the edge which grows into a bushy small tree bearing long narrow leathery leaves that have a few teeth on the margin towards the tip and produces 8-9mm wide purple fruit.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands. In the North rather patchy, known from Ahipara, Woodhill Forest (South Kaipara), the Moawhango and southern Rimutaka Range. In the S. Island more widespread but easterly from the Marlborough Sounds to Southland.



Auckland University ex unknown provenance.
Photographer: Bec Stanley



Auckland University ex unknown provenance.
Photographer: Bec Stanley

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine (10-800 m a.s.l.) on consolidated sand dunes (dune forest), in grey scrub overlying pumice, on recent alluvial (coarse gravels), limestone outcrops, boulder fall, cliff faces, talus slopes and scarps. Also found as a sparse component of seasonally drought-prone but otherwise cold and wet alluvial forests. This species prefers drier habitats and conditions than *P. crassifolius* (Sol. ex A.Cunn.) C.Koch.

FEATURES

Gynodioecious small tree up to 8 m tall. Trunk slender, longitudinally deeply grooved and ridged, bark fawn, mottled grey-white, often finely encrusted with lichens. Seedling leaves patent, 15-40 x 3-6 mm, dark or light chocolate brown to almost black, linear-lanceolate, margins deeply lobed with hooked ends; sapling and unbranched juvenile leaves strongly deflexed, 100-500 x 6-15 mm, light brown mottled with fawn and white near lobes or dark chocolate brown, mottled with fawn and white near lobes, coriaceous, very thick and rigid, margins set with closely-spaced to more or less distant, broadly and broad-based, somewhat raised, rounded, prominently and sharply hooked lobes; midrib raised, 2 mm wide, leaf apex terminating in 2-6 crowded, hooked lobes; leaves at branching stage similar but shorter, sub- to ascending, sometimes more deeply and sharply lobed before passing into adult foliage. Adult leaves 50-150 x 10-20 mm, dark or light chocolate brown, oblong to linear-obovate or broadly lanceolate, narrowing to a stout petiole 10-20 mm long; apex obtuse or mucronate-apiculate, retuse, bluntly serrate to entire, veins evident above. Umbels terminal, compound, staminate and perfect umbels with 5-12 rays, 30-50 mm long; flowers more or less racemosely distributed, trending to umbellules in perfect flowers; pistillate with rays 10-30 mm long, umbellules 2-5-flowered. Stamens 4-5, ovary 5-loculed, 5-ovuled; style branches 5, fused, sometimes free at tips. Fruit 8-9 mm diameter, brown or purple-brown, ovoid, fleshy.

SIMILAR TAXA

Pseudopanax crassifolius is similar but the sapling and subadult leaves are green to dark green, usually with smaller, narrow-based, straight teeth, and the adult has much broader, greener, elliptic-cuneate, lanceolate to linear-obovate, acute or obtuse, entire to sinuate or rarely coarsely serrated leaves. *P. crassifolius* is a much larger tree reaching up to 20 m in good conditions.

FLOWERING

November - April

FRUITING

December - June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and can be struck from semi-hardwood cuttings - though necessarily of adult foliage. A very tough plant that favours highly fertile but dry soils in full sun to dappled light. It can tolerate poor fertility soils as well and is drought tolerant. Juvenile foliage is exceptional and so it is well known from cultivation.

THREATS

Probably warrants a higher threat listing. *P. ferox* is biologically sparse but it is also threatened by possum, deer and goat browse, because juvenile plants command high prices in the nursery trade accessible populations have and continue to be plundered for seedlings and ripe fruit. Hybridisation with *P. lessonii* (DC.) K.Koch has been reported from several northern populations, if substantiated, the long-term effect hybridism may have on the viability of *P. ferox* at these sites has yet to be evaluated. The most secure populations seem to be the one in the southern North Island and a few island populations in the Marlborough Sounds and those in the more remote parts of the south-eastern South Island.

ETYMOLOGY

pseudopanax: False cure

ferox: From the Latin *ferox* 'fierce', usually referring to very spiny plants

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Pseudopanax ferox* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pseudopanax-ferox/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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