

Pterophylla racemosa

COMMON NAMES

kāmahi, tawheo, tawhero, tawherowhero

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Tree to small shrub, young stems bearing deciduous stipules, leaves variable but as adults most simple, with deeply toothed margins, flowers white or pink, clustered in spike-like racemes

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tree up to 28 m tall often forming a narrowly domed canopy (but this will vary according to local conditions). **Trunk** up to 1.2 m diameter. **Branches** numerous, erect to spreading, **Foliage** heterophyllous, with distinct seedling, juvenile and adult leaves (reversion shoots common). **Stipules** caducous, 3–6 mm long, lanceolate, finely pubescent, yellow-green to pinkish. **Seedling and juvenile leaves** membranous to subcoriaceous, 10–60 × 10–30 mm; lamina simple to 3-lobed or 3-foliolate, ovate-elliptic to elliptic or lanceolate, apices subacute to acute, margins serrate to incised-serrate; adult leaves coriaceous, on petioles up to 20 mm long, lamina 30–100 × 20–40 mm lamina simple, elliptic, ovate-elliptic to broad-ovate, apices obtuse to subacute, margins rather coarsely, bluntly serrate. **Inflorescences** racemose; racemes 60–140 mm long, rachises and pedicels finely, pilose-pubescent; pedicels 2–4 mm long, clustered, ascending to spreading. **Sepals** 1.0–1.5 mm. long, ovate, persistent. **Petals** 4–(5), 2–3 mm long, ovate-oblong, white, cream or pale pink. **Stamens** 8–10, exserted; filaments up 10 mm long, white or pinkish white; anthers 0.2–0.3 mm diameter, cream. **Nectaries** 8, red; ovary, narrowly ovoid 0.8 mm diameter, covered in appressed hairs, carpels 2, free almost to base. **Pistils**: styles 3–4 mm long, pale pink, persistent; stigma 0.2–0.4 mm, pink or pale pink, punctate. **Fruit** a pubescent, broadly cylindrical capsule 4.0–5.8 × 2.7–3.1 mm, initially greyish drying honey-brown or dark brown. **Seeds** numerous, 1.0–1.5 mm long, narrowly elliptic to elliptic-oblong, orange-brown, apices bearing dense hair tufts, otherwise glabrous.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island, South Island and Stewart Island/Rakiura. The exact northern limits of *Pterophylla racemosa* are uncertain but probably lie somewhere along the Manukau Harbour and Hunua Ranges across the Kama Range. North of here the distinction between *P. racemosa* and *P. sylvicola* is often confused. This needs further study.



Progress Valley, Catlins (leaf detail).

Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Tararua Forest Park. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 23/12/2007, Licence: CC BY.

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine. A widespread and common tree of disturbed habitats in coastal and lowland to montane forest, often becoming locally dominant in higher elevation montane forest in the higher ranges of the North Island and western South Island.

GENUS

Pterophylla

FAMILY

Cunoniaceae

AUTHORITY

Pterophylla racemosa (L.f.) Pillon et H.C.Hopkins

SYNONYMS

Weinmannia racemosa L.f.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

July–January

FRUITING

October–May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Can also be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings. This is an attractive tree tolerant of a wide range of conditions and soil types though it does best in high light, and in free-draining soil. The flowers are very attractive to a range of insects and birds.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

racemosa: Raceme bearing

NVS CODE

PTERAC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 30$

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

McKenzie R. 1960. The distributional overlap of *Weinmannia sylvicola* and *Weinmannia racemosa*. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 17: 7–8.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (13 October 2012). Description prepared by P.J. de Lange.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Pterophylla racemosa* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pterophylla-racemosa/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pterophylla-racemosa/>

PDF DATE

08 June 2026