Quintinia serrata

COMMON NAMES
tāwheowheo, quintinia

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 with spotted twigs bearing wavy purple-spotted leaves and spikes of small whiteish flowers which develop into a dry capsule. Twigs with circular scales (lens needed). Leaves 20-160mm long by 10-50mm wide, margin smooth or with scattered teeth, edge wavy.

Mt Karioi, south of Raglan. Photographer: John Sawyer, Date taken: 01/07/2013, Licence: CC BY-NC.

FLOWER COLOURS
White

Erua Forest. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 24/11/2013, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Small tree up to 12 m tall; trunk up to 500 mm d.b.h. Bark greyish-white to grey-brown, often mottled and covered with small lichens, mosses and liverworts. branches ascending. Young branchlets, leaves, peduncles and pedicels ± viscid and invested with lepidote ± scurfy scales. Leaves alternate, exstipulate, yellow-green to dark green usually blotched dark maroon sometimes not, borne on petioles up to 20 mm long; lamina 20-160 × 10-50 mm, narrowly lanceolate, oblanceolate, narrowly oblong, elliptic, broadly elliptic-obovate to obovate-cuneate, apex obtuse, subacute to acute, margins weakly to strongly undulose or flat, obscurely to distinctly serrate, or entire (if serrate then serration apices distinctly glandular). Inflorescences racemose, axillary or terminal. Racemes 35-80 mm long, pedicels c.3-4 mm long; Flowers gynodioecious, 3-7 mm diameter, calyx tube adnate to ovary, lobes persistent; petals 1.5-3·5 mm long, white to whitish-pink, obovate-oblong, narrow ovate to ovate-oblong, imbricate; female flowers with 5 rudimentary stamen (often reduced to staminodes, sometimes completely absent); ovary 3-5-celled, style persistent; stigmas capitate, 3-5-lobed; hermaphrodite flowers similar but with 5 functional stamens and functional gynoecium. Capsules 3-5-valved, 4-6 mm long, including style, obovoid, ellipsoid or oblong. Seeds 1.3-2.0 mm long, narrowly ovate, elliptic, ovate-elliptic to oblong, compressed, surface glabrous, finely reticulate with elongated cells, orange-brown to brown.

SIMILAR TAXA
None. The distinctive maroon mottled yellowish green leaves, scurfy, lepidote scales covering the young branchlets, leaves, peduncles and pedicels, and white to pinkish-white flowers borne in racemes readily distinguish Quintinia from any other New Zealand indigenous tree.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North and South Islands (from about Kaitaia south to Wellington; in the South Island mostly westerly in the South Island to about Martins Bay)

HABITAT
Coastal to montane usually in forest, in the northern part of its range often confined to cooler valley heads and ridge lines or prominent on the summits of major ranges and peaks (in so called “cloud forest”). In the southern part of its range extending into coastal forest where it may form a major part of the forest understorey and/or canopy in disturbed sites

GENUS
Quintinia

FAMILY
Paracryphiaceae

AUTHORITY
Quintinia serrata A.Cunn.

SYNONYMS
Quintinia acutifolia Kirk, Quintinia elliptica Hook.f.

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Quintinia is extremely variable and some extremes have been known by the species names Q. acutifolia and Q. elliptica. In this Fact Sheet the view expressed by Eagle (1982, 2006) and Dawson & Lucas (2011) is followed, in that one species, Q. serrata is accepted. However, a proper study of the variation in Quintinia is still needed to confirm that there is indeed just the one species. The main distinguishing character between the three species accepted by Allan (1961) leaf shape, varies sometimes within populations but definitely from north to south and east to west, suggesting the three species are part of a natural cline. Interestingly Webb & Simpson (2001) maintain two species (Q. acutifolia and Q. serrata) on the basis of minor differences in seed size; they do not accept Q. elliptica which they consider indistinguishable from Q. acutifolia.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September - March

FRUITING
November - June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Difficult. Best grown from fresh seed although results vary. Does well in a shaded or semi-shaded situation planted in a deep, moist, fertile soil. Plants are prone to sudden collapse, especially during periods of drought. However, as with seed germination results vary and some people find cultivation of Quintinia easy, others not.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
UPL: Obligate Upland
Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION
Occasionally offered by specialist native plant nurseries.

ETYMOLOGY
quintinia: Named after the 17th century French horticulturist Jean (Johannis) de la Quintinie (Quintinye)
serrata: Saw-toothed

NVS CODE
QUISER

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 44

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 At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CI, DPS, DPT, PF, RR Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available.
The Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Northland: 2026 | Regionally Not Threatened Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available.
The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau" Ford et al. 2026 report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I, Government Printer, Wellington.
Dawson, J.; Lucas, R. 2011: New Zealand's Native Trees. Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson.
Eagle, A.L. 1982: Eagle's trees and shrubs of New Zealand, second series. Collins, Auckland.
Eagle, A.L. 2006: Eagle's complete trees and shrubs of New Zealand. Te Papa Press, Wellington.
Webb, C.J.; Simpson, M.J.A. 2001: Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons. Manuka Press, Christchurch.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange January 2012. Description adapted from Allan (1961), Dawson & Lucas (2011) and Webb & Simpson (2001).
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MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/quintinia-serrata/

PDF DATE
25 August 2026