Rubus cissoides

COMMON NAME
tātarāmoa, bush lawyer

SYNONYMS
Rubus australis var. cissoides (A.Cunn.) Hook.f.

FAMILY
Rosaceae

AUTHORITY
Rubus cissoides A.Cunn.

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE
RUBCIS

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 28

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Prickly vine with compound, leathery, hairless leaves, leaflets 3-5 leathery, margins serrated, veins, petiolules, petioles and young stems armed in red prickles. Flowers in much-branched panicles, white. Fruits numerous, orange-red to red.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North, South, Stewart Islands

HABITAT
Coastal to montane. Usually in forest but also found in scrub, and on the margins of wetlands.
FEATURES
Much-branched dioecious vine or scrambling vine with stems up to 10 m or more long. Primary stems up to 150 mm diameter, terete, more or less glabrous (when young sparsely covered in minute stalked glands); mature branches unarmed, otherwise branchlets covered with stout, falcate reddish prickles. Stipules narrow-linear. Leaves palmate or tertiately, even and usually sharply serrate, coriaceous, glabrate, leaflets of juveniles up to 5, otherwise mature plants with 3-5, veins usually distinct, petioles and petiolules usually armed with recurved prickles, stipules narrow-linear; lamina of leaflets varying with range, those of northern North Island populations 70-150 × 3-10 mm, usually narrow-linear-lanceolate, acuminate, base truncate (rarely shallowly cordate); those of southern North Island 60-150 × 20-30 mm, usually ovate-lanceolate, acute to acuminate, rarely obtuse, base subcordate; those of South Island 60-150 × 30-60 mm, broadly ovate-oblong to oblong, acute to acuminate, rarely obtuse, base truncate to oblique at base. Inflorescence a much-branched panicle up to 800 mm long, branchlets and pedicels glandular-pubescent. Flowers white (rarely cream). Sepals pubescent, pale-margined, ovate-oblong, obtuse, 3-5 mm long. Petals 5, 5-8 mm long, ovate, oblong or obovate. Male flowers with numerous stamens. Style absent or rudimentary. Female flowers without stamens, or if present these sparse and rudimentary. Fruits up to 12 mm diameter, drupelets 10-15 (or more), orange-red to red. Endocarp ('seed') 1.6-2.7 mm long, dorsally-ridged 1(-3)x.

SIMILAR TAXA
Distinguished from introduced Rubus (blackberries, raspberries wineberries etc) by the smaller flowers, usually palmate or tertiately leaves, and the lack of long glandular bristly hairs on the young stems. From other indigenous Rubus (bush lawyers) can be distinguished by the reddish prickles, and by the leaves which are hairless (glabrous) or almost so on their undersides, and smooth above (never bullate)

FLOWERING
September - November

FLOWER COLOURS
White

FRUITING
December - April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from layered stems and semi-hardwood cuttings. Flourished when planted in damp ground in a well-lighted situation. Not often grown on account of its prickly stems - but nevertheless an attractive plant. The fruits though edible are insipid.

ETYMOLOGY
rubus: From the Latin meaning bramble
cissoides: Ivy-like

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Rubus cissoides is a variable species (Allan 1961; Webb et al. 1988) and at least three races can be recognised. These have a geographic basis. The type is from Northland, and those plants can be distinguished from the other races within R. cissoides by their palmate leaves, and juvenile plants whose leaflets are narrowly lanceolate to almost linear. From about the Central North Island south to Wellington another race appears which usually has tertiately leaves, and the leaflets are rather broadly ovate with truncate bases (this race may also be in the northern South Island). In the South Island another race occurs that has palmate-ternate leaves of variable shape (though never linear or narrowly lanceolate) and with truncate, cordate to oblique leaflet bases. These races are well defined and probably merit some level of taxonomic recognition.

ATTRIBUTION

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING