

Shawia telmatica

COMMON NAMES

shell akeake, swamp akeake

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CI, DPR, DPS, DPT, IE, PF, RR, RF

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Small tree with oval dark green leathery leaves that are whiteish underneath inhabiting damp sites on the Chatham Islands. Trunk often hollow. Leaves 15–70mm long by 6–35mm wide. Flowers yellowish, in small clusters, appearing late winter. Seeds fluffy.

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Small tree 4–8 m tall; main trunks up to 400 mm diameter. Bark light grey, shallowly fissured and smoothly textured on trunk and old branches; branchlets 1.6–2.1 mm diameter. Leaves 14–70 × 6–35 mm, elliptic, broadly elliptic, or obovate, upper surface green and glossy, lower surface with dense appressed tomentum, hairs fulvous or off-white, margin entire, apex acute to subacute, base cuneate to attenuate, petiole 4–7 mm long. Inflorescence an axillary panicle with 4–17 capitula, abscising after fruiting; panicle primary branches in 2–4 opposite pairs, lowest pair of branches each with 1–3 capitula, upper branches each with 1 capitulum, capitula in opposite pairs; covered in fulvous or off-white hairs. Capitulum 5.0–7.2 mm long, involucre cylindric; involucral bracts 10–14, in 1–2 series, upper surface glabrous, lower surface sparsely to moderately covered with fulvous hairs. Florets 7–11 per capitulum; corolla usually lemon-yellow, sometimes cream to pale yellow. Achenes 1.4–1.7 × 0.6–0.7 mm, narrowly cylindric, light brown, with 4–5 pale ribs, sparsely to moderately hairy; pappus 2.8–4.2 mm long, finely scabrid.

SIMILAR TAXA

Shawia telmatica differs from the closely related akeake (*S. traversiorum*) by its restriction to permanently flooded swamp habitats, smaller stature, slender trunk, narrower leaves, lemon-yellow and less hairy corolla, less branched inflorescence with fewer capitula, fulvous hairs on the inflorescence, earlier flowering season, readily dispersed seed, and abscising inflorescences.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Chatham Islands: Rekohu / Wharekauir (Chatham), Rangihauite / Rangiauria (Pitt) and Hokoreoreoro / Rangatira / South East Islands.

HABITAT

A conspicuous component of Chatham Island swamp forest, a vegetation type that has developed in sites that are either prone to seasonal flooding or almost permanently flooded throughout the year. These habitats include the margins of lakes, ponds, and slowly flowing rivers and streams, around springs or in other sites with perched water tables.



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Nikau Bush. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 30/07/2015, Licence: Public domain.

THREATS

Shell akeake was formerly widespread across the two main islands, Rekohu (Chatham Island) and Rangiauria (Pitt Island). However most of its swamp forest habitat has now been cleared and there are very few places where this habitat survives intact. Most of the remaining swamp forest remnants on the islands are unfenced and stock have frequent access, and peripheral damage caused by wind throw, and the drying out of the peat soils are serious threats both to the species and this vegetation type. Another serious threat is recruitment failure. While seedlings are frequently seen in the more intact, and wetter swamp forest remnants, it seems that very few of these reach maturity.

GENUS

Shawia

FAMILY

Asteraceae

AUTHORITY

Shawia telmatica (Heenan & de Lange) Saldivia & Nicol

SYNONYMS

Olearia telmatica Heenan & de Lange

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

August – October

FRUITING

October – January

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and semi-hardwood cuttings. Plants layer readily. Probably would flourish best in a permanently moist soil.

ETYMOLOGY

shawia: After Thomas Shaw (1694-1751), English scholar and traveller.

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 108

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, DP, IE, RR, RF

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, DP, IE, RF

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: CD, DP, IE, RF

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Heenan, P.B., P.J. de Lange, Houliston, G.J., Barnaud, A., and Murray, B.G. 2008: *Olearia telmatica* (Asteraceae: Astereae), a new tree species endemic to the Chatham Islands. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 46(4): 567-583.
Saldivia, P.; Nicol, D.A. 2025: Reinstatement, broader circumscription, and infrageneric classification of *Shawia* (Astereae, Celmisiiinae), a large woody genus endemic to Australasia. *Phytoneuron* 49: 1-43.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet by Peter J. de Lange (14 December 2008). Description based on Heenan *et al.* (2008).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/shawia-telmatica/>

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