Toronia toru

COMMON NAMES
toru, toro, toto, mihimihi

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Small bushy tree with long narrow leathery smooth edged-leaves that are yellowish when young and red when dying. Leaves 16-20cm long by 8-15mm wide, sharp tipped. Flowers yellowish or white, small, in clusters. Fruit dark purple, 12-18mm long.

FLOWER COLOURS
White, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Small dioecious (or gynodioecious) tree up to 12 m tall; trunk 1 or more arising from base, 0.2-0.3 m dbh; bark firm (not flaking), grey, grey-brown, brown or mottled grey, grey-brown. Branches usually numerous, initially upright, then spreading (sometimes decurved and/or pendulous); branchlets initially semi-terete (± compressed on one or more sides), maturing terete, minutely puberulous. Leaves alternate, semi-whorled, glabrous, ± fleshy and thickly coriaceous, bright green to yellow green (often mottled or spotted with red), glossy, midrib light green or yellow, raised, veins not evident, margins entire, thickened and often distinctly paler than rest of lamina; petioles stout, fleshy, 2-4 mm long, yellow-green or red. Lamina 160-250 mm × 8-15 mm, narrow linear-lanceolate, abruptly acute or apiculate, base attenuate (gradually narrowing to petiole). Inflorescences axillary, bracteate, 6-12(-20)-flowered racemes up to 60 mm long; rhacis and pedicels pubescent, indumentum ferruginous; bracts basal, minute, ± caducous. Flowers fragrant, tepals 5-9 mm long, linear-ovate to ovate, abaxially pubescent, indumentum ferruginous, adaxially yellow, margins undulate, ± pubescent; staminate flowers with 4 stamens, ovary rudimentary in some flowers possibly functional; pistillate flowers with 4 rudimentary stamen, ovary urceolate, subsessile, style short, stigma oblique. Drupe 1(-2)-seeded, 12-18 mm long, ellipsoid, exocarp succulent, flesh red; endocarp 9-14 mm long, elliptic (sometimes broadly elliptic or ovate) or assymetric, hard, surface reticulate and finely striate, semi-glossy, light brown to brown, retriculate.

Kennedy Bay, November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 08/11/1981, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
Toro (Myrsine salicina) is superficially similar (as indicated by the Maori name). Toro is easily distinguished from Toronia. It has narrow-elliptic, narrow-oblong, to linear-oblong leaves with obtuse apices, rather than narrow linear-lanceolate, abruptly acute or apiculate leaves and flowers borne in dense fascicles rather than racemes. willow-leaved hakea (Hakea salicifolia) with which toru sometimes grows is vegetatively similar but has white flowers borne in fascicles and hard woody, beaked fruits.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. North Island from Te Paki south to the mouth of the Waihaha River, on the western side of Lake Taupo. However south of Auckland, toru is mostly found in the east from the Coromandel throughout the Bay of Plenty to about Atiamuri. In the western Waikato it is known locally from the northern end of the Aotea Harbour, near Kawhia (Rakaunui), Te Kauri and Whenuapo in the Taumatatotara Range. The species also occurs in a small portion of Tairawhiti / East Cape

HABITAT
Coastal to montane mostly on infertile soils, in open shrubland (especially gumland), early successional forest and along ridge lines and around slip scars in kauri (Agathis australis) and/or tanekaha (Phyllocladus trichomanoides) dominated forest. It is locally abundant on silicic igneous rocks such as rhyolite, ignimbrite and pumice.

GENUS
Toronia

FAMILY
Proteaceae

AUTHORITY
Toronia toru (A.Cunn.) L.A.S.Johnson et B.G.Briggs

SYNONYMS
Persoonia toru A.Cunn.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September - January

FRUITING
October - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown in a warm, sunny site. Once established toru is a very attractive small tree. As is typical of other members of the family it does best in infertile soils and should never have any phosphate containing fertilisers applied to it. Toru is said to be frost-sensitive.

NVS CODE
TORTOR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 28

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 Declining | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, PF, RF 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.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I, Wellington, Government Printer.
Webb, C.J.; Simpson, M.J.A. 2001: Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons. Christchurch, Manuka Press.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 10 February 2011. Description adapted from Allan (1961) and Webb & Simpson (2001).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/toronia-toru/

PDF DATE

08 June 2026