

Vitex lucens

COMMON NAME

Puriri

SYNONYMS

Vitex littoralis A.Cunn.

FAMILY

Lamiaceae

AUTHORITY

Vitex lucens Kirk

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

VITLUC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 64

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

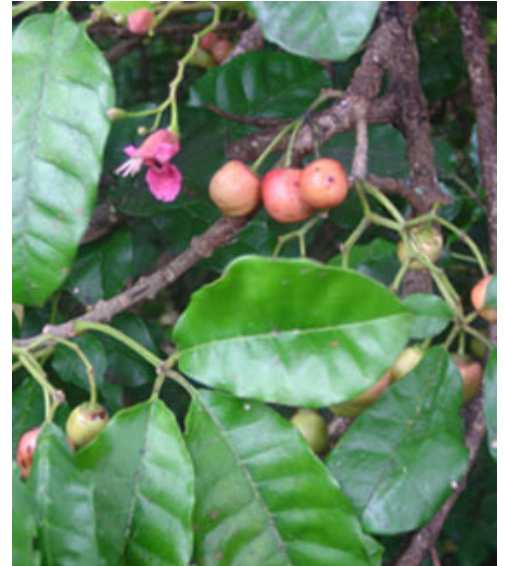
Large tree with thin pale flaky bark over an uneven knobby trunk bearing dark green leaves made of five wrinkled leaflets radiating from the top of a stalk, largest leaflet in the middle, flowers pink, bell-shaped with projecting pale filaments, fruit 2cm wide and red.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Three Kings Islands and North Island from Te Pahi to Taranaki, Mahia Peninsula and the northern Hawkes Bay. Puriri is, as a rule, scarce south of about Opotiki and Kawhia.

HABITAT

In the northern part of its range Puriri is a common co-dominant with Taraire (*Beilschmiedia tarairi*) and karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*) especially on rich fertile soils derived from basaltic and basaltic-andesitic igneous rocks. South of the northern Bay of Plenty and Raglan Harbours it is rarely found inland and is more commonly found in coastal forest where it co-habits with pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) and karaka. Puriri is also an important forest tree on many of the smaller islands of the Hauraki Gulf, where it may at times be the canopy dominant.



Puriri. Photographer: Wayne Bennett



At Papa Aroha, Coromandel. November.
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

FEATURES

Tree up to c. 20 m. tall with a broad spreading canopy; trunk up to c.1.5 m. diameter; bark grey-brown, firm, flaking in small irregular-shaped shards. Branches stout, spreading; branchlets 4-angled, green. Leaves opposite, glabrous, coriaceous, compound, on petioles up to 110 mm long; leaflets 3-4-5, somewhat undulose, adaxially dark green, glossy, abaxially lighter green, mat; basal one or pair of leaflets usually much smaller than the terminal 3, digitate; lamina of 3 main leaflets 50-140 × 30-60 mm; elliptic-oblong to obovate, abruptly acute to subacuminate, margin entire. Domatia (pit-type) present at axils of costa and main veins. Inflorescence in axillary, dichotomous, (4)-10-15-flowered panicles. Calyx cupular, minutely 5-toothed; corolla dull red, pink or white, pubescent, 2-lipped, c.25-35 mm long. Upper lip entire or bifid, lower deflexed, 3-lobed. Style slender, bifid, c.25 mm long. Drupe 20-26 mm diameter subglobose, bright red, pink or white.

SIMILAR TAXA

None

FLOWERING

May - October

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

FRUITING

January - October

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from seed. Seed can be slow to germinate, although germination can be hastened by scarifying the seed coat. Seedlings and saplings are frost tender and require a sheltered, warm, semi-shaded site (at least initially to thrive). Puriri prefers a rich, deep, fertile soil but is surprisingly tolerant of a range of conditions including drought (once established). This is a spectacular specimen tree that deserves to be more widely cultivated than it is. It makes an excellent street/avenue or park tree, and the flowers attract birds (especially tui and bellbird) and the fruits kereru

THREATS

Not Threatened. However, in some parts of Northland puriri "die-back" has been observed (the exact causes of which are much debated). Puriri is at times heavily browsed by possums, to such an extent that trees can die.

ETYMOLOGY

vitex: To wieve or tie up, chaste

lucens: Shining

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 9 February 2011. Description adapted from Allan (1961).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I, Wellington, Government Printer.

CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Vitex lucens* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/vitex-lucens/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/vitex-lucens/>