

Xeronema callistemon f. callistemon

COMMON NAME

Poor Knights Lily, Raupo-Taranga

SYNONYMS

Xeronema callistemon W.R.B.Oliv., *Xeronema callistemon* W.R.B.Oliv. var. *callistemon*

FAMILY

Xeronemataceae

AUTHORITY

Xeronema callistemon f. *callistemon* W.R.B.Oliv.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Monocotyledonous Herbs

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 34, 36

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE, RR

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

2004 | Range Restricted

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Only known from the Poor Knights Islands near Tutukaka, and from Hen (Taranga) Island, near Whangarei. *Xeronema* belongs to a newly established family of one genus with two species, the Xeronemataceae.

HABITAT

Rhyolite sea cliffs and rock outcrops. Occasionally in forest on rubble or as an epiphyte on pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*). These latter occurrences probably stem from fallen plants captured in trees or resprouting on the forest floor.

FEATURES

Forming huge colonies 1-4 m across. Leaves green to yellow-green, arising from thick rhizomes, and forming flattened fans, 60-150 x 3-5 cm. Dead leaves long persistent, ultimately detached from the frayed base to form a fibrous mass. Inflorescences on green, thick, leafy stems (peduncle) up to 1 m. Racemes 10-60 cm long, aligned vertically on upper side of peduncle. Flowers crowded, numerous. Flower stalks (pedicels) 1-15 mm long, subtended by a pale green translucent leafy bract, which is obviously shorter than the buds. Flowers red, tepals 10-15 mm, outer 3 mm wide, inner 1.5 mm. Stamen filaments twice length of tepals, anthers 4 mm long, pollen tangerine-orange. Ovary 4 x 2 mm, oblong-3-angled, covered with copious nectar. Capsule 9-11 mm. Seeds ovate, 1.6 x 1 mm, black.



Tatua Peak, October. Photographer: Peter de Lange



Tatua Peak, Aorangi Island, September. Photographer: Gillian Crowcroft

SIMILAR TAXA

None in New Zealand. Similar to *X. moorei* of New Caledonia (the only other species of the genus, and family), which differs in some floral and capsule details, and by the seed size and shape. *X. callistemon* f. *callistemon* differs from f. *bracteosa* only in one character, the much shorter pale green to translucent floral bracts, which are shorter than the emerging flower buds.

FLOWERING

September to December, peaking in October.

FLOWER COLOURS

Orange, Red/Pink

FRUITING

November to January.

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from divisions of whole plants, and seed. But seed must be fresh, and though germinating easily can take 10-15 years to reach flowering size. *Xeronema* is best grown in a long narrow pot, within a free draining mix of rock chips and compost. Plants should be watered frequently, and frequently fertilised with sea weed, manure, or high phosphate/nitrogen garden fertilisers. They should be allowed to become root bound (or they will not flower), and need high sunlight. Plants are very cold sensitive, dying in even mild frosts.

THREATS

None. The species is listed only because it is endemic to two very small island archipelago.

ETYMOLOGY

xeronema: From the Greek *xeros* 'dry' and *nema* 'thread'

callistemon: With a beautiful stamen

WHERE TO BUY

Becoming more common in cultivation, and easily obtained from most garden centres.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 October 2004. Description based on Moore & Edgar (1970) supplemented by observations obtained from fresh specimens and herbarium material (see also de Lange & Cameron 1999).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange, P.J.; Cameron, E.K. 1999: The vascular flora of Aorangi Island, Poor Knights Islands, northern New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 37: 433-468.

Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. II. Wellington, Government Printer.

Oliver, W.R.B. 1926: New Zealand angiosperms. *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 56: 1-5.

Oliver, H. 1968. Note on the growing of *Xeronema callistemon*. *Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin* 35: 22

CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/xeronema-callistemon-f-callistemon/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/xeronema-callistemon-f-callistemon/>