

# Pittosporum kirkii

## COMMON NAME

Kirk's kōhūhū, thick-leaved kohukohu

## SYNONYMS

None

## FAMILY

Pittosporaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Pittosporum kirkii* Hook.f.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## NVS CODE

PITKIR

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 24

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, PD

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Serious Decline

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Shrub often growing on other trees and bearing narrow leathery thick leaves that are widest towards the tip and with flattened hard capsules. Leaves 5-10cm long by 2-3cm wide. Flowers yellow, in cluster at tip of twigs. Fruit 2.5-4cm long, splitting into two showing the black seeds in yellow pith.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to the northern half or the North Island, from Karikari Peninsula south of the northern reaches of the Whanganui River and west to Taranaki Mouna (Mt Egmont National Park).

## HABITAT

Usually epiphytic, rarely terrestrial in coastal to montane forest.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A small, gynodioecious, openly-branched shrub to 4 m tall with stout, purplish branches. Leaves are crowded towards the tips of the branch on 10 mm long stalks. The leaf blade is thick and fleshy, and broadens towards a rounded tip; leaves are 50–100 mm long by 20–30 mm wide. Flowers are either solitary or in clusters of up to four at the tips of branches, bright yellow and appear in November. Fruit are oval, woody capsules up to 40 mm long that split in half to reveal black seeds sitting in yellow sticky pulp, and appear in January.



Foliage. Photographer: Ewen Cameron, Licence: CC BY-NC.



At Mt Kaipawa, Coromandel (December).  
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Pittosporum cornifolium*, another epiphyte, has leaves that are usually shorter, broader and much thinner, and the inside of the capsules are shiny and bright orange. Kirk's kohuhu could also be confused with Kirks tree daisy (*Brachyglottis kirkii* var. *kirkii*) but that species has white daisy-like flowers and dandelion-like wind-borne seeds.

## FLOWERING

October to December

## FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

## FRUITING

January to May

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed. Can also be grown from semi hardwood cuttings but slow to strike.

## THREATS

Forest clearance, possum browse.

## ETYMOLOGY

**pittosporum**: Pitch seed

**kirkii**: After Thomas Kirk (18 January 1828 - 8 March 1898), a NZ botanist and lecturer in natural sciences and regarded as a leader of botanical enquiry in NZ for over three decades. One of his most significant publications was Forest flora of NZ (1889) but he also contributed over 130 papers to the Transactions and Proceedings of the NZ Institute and other journals.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 30 August 2006. Description adapted from Cooper (1956).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Cooper, R.C. 1956: The Australian and New Zealand species of *Pittosporum*. *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden* 43: 87-188

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pittosporum-kirkii/>