

Pseudopanax laetus

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Bushy shrub with large hand-shaped leaves on red stalks

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Small multi-branched tree to 5 m tall, branchlets brittle. **Leaves** alternate, leaflets 5–7, palmate, on short petiolules. **Petiole** to 25 cm long, sheathing branchlet at base, stipules present, purplish red. **Petiolules** stout, purplish red or leaflets sessile. **Leaflets** obovate- to cuneate-oblong, thick and coriaceous, green above, paler below, margin coarsely dentate-serrate in distal half, acute or acuminate to subacute; midveins and main lateral veins obvious above and below; terminal lamina 12–25 × 5–10 cm or more, lateral leaflets smaller. **Inflorescence** a terminal, compound umbel, flowers sometimes subracemose on secondary rays; primary rays (branchlets) 10–15; 15–20 secondary rays. **Calyx** truncate or obscurely 5-toothed; petals ovate-oblong, acute. **Ovary** 2-loculed, each containing 1 ovules; style branches 2, spreading. **Fruit** fleshy, purple, c. 5 mm diameter, laterally compressed, style branches retained on an apical disc. **Seeds** 2 per fruit, broadly-ovate or oblong, wrinkled, 3.4–4.7–(5.1) mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

The dark red petioles and large leaflets of this species are distinctive

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (from Coromandel to inland Gisborne and Taranaki).

HABITAT

Montane forest.

THREATS

This species is highly palatable to browsing animals. Subsequently it is usually only found in cliff refugia or other similar sites inaccessible to browsing animals. Possums seriously damage plants and have been responsible for its near extinction in some parts.

This plant has naturalised out of its natural range in New Zealand and is weedy in parts of Southern New Zealand including Invercargill and Stewart Island. Caution should be exercised when planting it out of its natural range.

GENUS

Pseudopanax

FAMILY

Araliaceae



Close up, Pseudopanax laetus mature foliage, Upper Kaueranga Valley. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Pseudopanax laetus close up of inflorescence with flowers during male phase, Ex Cult. Puhoi. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Date taken: 30/09/2006, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Pseudopanax laetus (Kirk) Allan

SYNONYMS

Panax arboreus var. *laetus* Kirk, *Nothopanax laetus* (Kirk) Cheeseman, *Neopanax laetus* (Kirk) Philipson

TAXONOMIC NOTES

This species was transferred back to *Neopanax* Allan by: Frodin & Govaerts (2003).

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

(August)–September–November

FRUITING

October–February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from fresh seed. Can be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings. Very fast growing and tolerant of a wide range of soil types and moisture regimes but dislikes very dry soils. Best in damp soils.

CULTIVATION

Common in cultivation and sold by most plant nurseries.

ETYMOLOGY

pseudopanax: False cure

laetus: From the Latin *laetus* 'bright'

NVS CODE

PSELAE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 48$

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: RF

2004 | Gradual Decline

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan HH. 1961. *Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsidea, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones*. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.

Eagle A. 2006. *Eagle's complete trees and shrubs of New Zealand*. Te Papa Press, Wellington, NZ. 2-volume boxed set: vol. 1 pp 1–529; vol. 2: pp 532–1114.

Frodin DG, Govaerts R. 2003. *World Checklist and Bibliography of Araliaceae*, The Cromwell Press, European Union. 444 p.

Webb CJ, Simpson MJA. 2001. *Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons*. Manuka Press, Christchurch. 428 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Allan (1961), Eagle (2006), Webb and Simpson (2001).

Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pseudopanax-laetus/) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/) licence.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pseudopanax-laetus/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026