

# Pittosporum fairchildii

## COMMON NAMES

Fairchild's kōhūhū

## SYNONYMS

None

## FAMILY

Pittosporaceae

## AUTHORITY

Pittosporum fairchildii Cheeseman

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

## NVS CODE

PITFAI

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 24

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

2004 | Range Restricted

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Large shrub bearing dark green leathery leaves that are paler underneath and with large yellow-green capsules inhabiting the Three Kings Islands. Leaves 5-7.5cm long, sparsely covered in white fuzz when young. Fruit 2.5cm wide, splitting into three or four sections to show the dark sticky seeds.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Three Kings Islands where it is known from North East, Great (Manawa Tawhi), South East and West islands.

## HABITAT

Coastal forest and sheltered cliff faces. Usually found in the forest understorey, though on occasion it may grow within open petrel scrub.



Pittosporum fairchildii fruit and foliage.  
Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Pittosporum fairchildii showing fruits and leaf undersides. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Gynodioecious shrub to small tree 3-6 m tall. Trunk stout, sometimes with 2 or more arising from ground grey-black, lenticillate. Branches erect to spreading, grey-black; branchlets similar clad in grey to brownish-grey tomentum, emergent shoots and immature branchlets white-tomentose, all soon becoming glabrous. Leaves alternate, usually crowded toward branch and branchlet apices. Petioles 3-8 x 0.5-2 mm, white to brown-tomentose. 40-70 x 20-38 mm, dark to light green above, much paler beneath, obovate, elliptic-obovate, elliptic-oblong or oblanceolate, apex obtuse or acute, base acute, margins entire; surfaces white to brown-tomentose when young, soon glabrous above but remaining finely tomentulose below when mature; very coriaceous, sometimes revolute. Flowers in terminal 2-4-flowered fascicles; pedicels 12-20 mm, accrescent in fruit, brown-tomentose, subtended by a whorl of leaves and caducous, ciliate, 5-10 mm long, bud scales. Sepals 4-7 x 2-3.5 mm, lanceolate, acute, brown-tomentose outside, glabrous within, ciliate. Petals 9-14 x 2.5-4.5 mm, lanceolate-oblong, subacute, free, spreading from about half their length, purple, chocolate or white. Stamens 7-8.5 mm, anthers 1.5-2.5 x 0.5-1.3 mm, sagittiform or elliptic-oblong. Ovary 2.5-6 x 2-4 mm, brown-tomentose; style 3-4 mm, stigma capitate or truncate. Capsules 20-25 mm diameter, 3-valved, subglobose, finely brown tomentose, glabrate, smooth to finely rugose; valves green maturing pale yellow, coriaceous to almost fleshy, scarcely opening at maturity. Mucilage bright yellow. Seeds 20-30, black, round.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Superficially similar to *Pittosporum crassifolium* but differing by its glabrate mature leaves and capsules, and mainly brownish rather than grey-white tomentum. The glabrate, mature capsules of *P. fairchildii* scarcely open, and are coloured green or yellow-green, while those of *P. crassifolium* are copiously covered in white-grey indumentum, and fully open when mature.

## FLOWERING

May - September

## FLOWER COLOURS

Brown, Violet/Purple

## FRUITING

August - June (may be present throughout the year)

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed which germinates within 6-8 months from sowing. Semi-hardwood cuttings also strike readily. This species readily hybridises with *P. crassifolium* Banks et Sol. ex A.Cunn., so should be planted well away from that species if pure seed is desired. Some nursery lines sold as *P. fairchildii* are in fact this hybrid.

## THREATS

Not threatened. However, it occupies a rather small geographic area and so qualifies for Range Restricted status.

## ETYMOLOGY

**pittosporum**: Pitch seed

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

## 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 fairchildii* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pittosporum-fairchildii/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

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

**PDF DATE**

17 September 2024