

Melicytus micranthus

COMMON NAMES

swamp māhoe. manakura

SYNONYMS

Elaeodendron micranthum Hook.f., *Melicytus micranthus* Hook.f., *Melicytus micranthus* Hook.f. var. *micranthus*, *Melicytus microphyllus* Colenso, *Melicytus micranthus* var. *microphyllus* (Colenso) Cheeseman

FAMILY

Violaceae

AUTHORITY

Melicytus micranthus (Hook.f.) Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

MELMIC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 96

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Zig-zagging shrub with interlacing branches bearing small wavy-edged green leaves with a pale blotch at the base and that have the vein network more visible on the underside. Twigs fuzzy. Leaves 1.5-2.3cm long, in various shapes, widest at middle, scattered along stem. Flowers small, white. Fruit dark purple.

DISTRIBUTION

North and South Islands. Local in Eastern Canterbury, rare in Westland.

HABITAT

Lowland forest, scrub and forest margins, especially on drier sites and on alluvial ground.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).






Hauraki plains, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Hauraki plains, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub up to 2 m. tall or occ. more; branches stiff ± interlaced; branchlets stiff, ± pubescent. Leaves sometimes fascicled; petioles slender 3-5- (10) mm. long, ± pubescent; lamina subcoriaceous, 1-2.5 × 1-2 cm., elliptic- to obovate-oblong to broad-ovate, sinuate to subcrenate, sometimes sub-entire. Flowers minute, axillary, solitary or 2-3 together; pedicels ± pubescent;  with short ± ciliate rounded calyx-lobes; petals oblong, twice length of calyx; anthers broad, sessile; connective flat.  calyx and petals as in ; style short, stout; stigma discoid, 3-5-lobed. Berry 3-4 mm. diam., obovoid to subglobose, dark purple; seeds (1)-4. Flowers: October - April. Fruit: November to May.

SIMILAR TAXA

Similar to juvenile kaikōmako (*Pennantia corymbosa*) and distinguished by the prominent terminal lobes of leaf; often there are only two other squarish lobes, one on either side of the leaf, giving it a characteristic appearance that has been likened to webbed ducks feet. Small-leaved milk tree-tūrepo (*Streblus heterophyllus*) has distinctive juvenile foliage with deep notches, mostly near the base of the leaf, on at least some leaves, and fine serrations round the rest of the leaf margin. *Raukaua anomalus* is also similar but has a dark (rather the white) blotch at leaf base.

FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple, Yellow

ETYMOLOGY

melicytus: From the Greek meli (honey) and kytos (hollow container), referring to the staminal nectaries of the flowers. Literally “honey-cave”

micranthus: Small flower

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Melicytus micranthus var. *longiusculus* Cheeseman is based on the hybrid combination *M. micranthus* × *M. ramiflorus* and is thus not a synonym of *M. micranthus*. Type locality: Neslon.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for April 2019](#) for the full story.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by Marley Ford (23 March 2023). Distribution, Habitat, and similar taxa sections copied with permission from Wilson & Galloway (1993). Features from Allan (1961).

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REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H. H. 1961. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. 1. Wellington: Government Printer. Pg. 425-426.

Wilson, H & Galloway, T. 1993. Small-leaved shrubs of NZ. Manuka Press, Christchurch.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/melicytus-micranthus/>

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02 October 2024