

# Metrosideros albiflora

## COMMON NAMES

white flowering rātā, akatea

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Woody long-climbing vine. Mature plants only reproductive. Adult leaves green, without hairs, elliptic in shape, surfaces without any obvious glandular spotting. Flowers white, fluffy, in dense terminal clusters.

## FLOWER COLOURS

White

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout vine up to 20 m. Juvenile and climbing vines sparingly branched, mature (adult) vines much-branched. **Bark** initially dark brown, maturing grey, ± tessellated, and flaking in tabular shards. **Branchlets** terete, often curved from base, stiffly erect (sometimes pendent), initially reddish and finely pubescent, soon glabrous. **Leaves** not markedly dimorphic, evenly spaced (i.e. not close-set), coriaceous, glabrous, petiolate; petioles 2–6 mm long, ± terete, stout; juvenile lamina 10–20 × 10–20 mm, ovate to elliptic-ovate, adaxially green to dark green, paler abaxially, oil glands minute (not evident to naked eye), margins weakly recurved, sparsely hairy, glabrescent; adult lamina 35–90 × 20–46 mm, ovate, elliptic-ovate to elliptic-lanceolate, apex abruptly narrowed, acute or subacute, base cuneate, adaxially green to dark green, abaxially paler, oil glands as for juvenile. **Inflorescences** in large terminal, compound cymose botyria, each carrying 6–10 white flowers. **Hypanthium** 8 × 5 mm, broadly urceolate to funnelform, ± fleshy, glabrous, margins exceeding ovary (so forming broad disc); calyx lobes 1.8–2.2 mm long, ovate, obtuse, patent or reflexed at maturity. **Petals** 5 × 5 mm, caducous, suborbicular to orbicular, margins entire; stamens numerous, 15–30 mm long. **Anthers** yellow. **Style** 20–35 mm long, stigma capitate. **Capsule** 5–10 mm diameter, urceolate, 3–4-valved, woody, dark brown to brown-black when mature. **Seeds** 1.2–2.4 mm long, narrowly elliptic or narrowly obovate, straight (often curved near apex), light orange-yellow or orange, unfilled seeds darker.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Metrosideros albiflora*, despite the unfortunate vernacular “white rata” is not very similar to the other “white rata” *M. perforata*, which has much smaller, glandular punctate leaves, and smaller more numerous clusters of white flowers. The glabrous stems, tinged red when young, large, glabrous, elliptic-ovate to elliptic-lanceolate (rarely ovate), acute to subacute, green adult leaves, much larger, white flowers, and late winter to spring flowering habit serve to distinguish it from all other similar *Metrosideros* vines.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (confined to the north where it ranges from Te Pahi south to Pukemokemoke (north of Hamilton) and the northern Kaimai Ranges)



Waipoua. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Date taken: 06/11/2014, Licence: CC BY-NC.



*Metrosideros albiflora*. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## HABITAT

Coastal to montane in forest. *Metrosideros albiflora* is virtually confined to kauri (*Agathis australis*) forest associations.

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## THREATS

*Metrosideros albiflora* is often absent from large parts of potential range. It is most common in central and western Northland and the Coromandel Peninsula. Adult vines are often browsed by possums.

When myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) was detected in New Zealand (May 2017) the conservation status was upgraded as a precautionary measure to 'Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable' because, on best advice, it was believed that no indigenous Myrtaceae had resistance to the myrtle rust disease (de Lange et al. 2018).

Myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) is an invasive fungus that threatens native myrtle species. Learn more [myrtlerust.org.nz](http://myrtlerust.org.nz).

## DETAILED TAXONOMY

### FAMILY

Myrtaceae

### AUTHORITY

*Metrosideros albiflora* Sol. ex Gaertn.

### ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

### ENDEMIC GENUS

No

### ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## ECOLOGY

### FLOWERING

August–November

### FRUITING

January–April

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Although a beautiful species, *M. albiflora* is not commonly cultivated and it has a reputation for being difficult. Like all other climbing rata it can be grown from rooted pieces and from semi-hardwood cuttings. However like all *Metrosideros* cuttings can be fickle to strike. This species is cold sensitive.

## OTHER INFORMATION

### WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally sold by specialist native plant nurseries

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

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

## ETYMOLOGY

**metrosideros**: Iron heart

**albiflora**: From Latin albus 'white' and florus 'flower'

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to the Myrtaceae of New Zealand](#)

## NVS CODE

METALB

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, De

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, PF, RR, Rel Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the [“Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland”](#) Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

## REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

### ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (6 January 2013). Description from herbarium specimens and fresh material

### NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Metrosideros albiflora* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

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

### MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/metrosideros-albiflora/>

### PDF DATE

30 July 2025