Pseudopanax colensoi var. ternatus

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Small much-branched tree with 3 fleshy leaflets arranged fanwise on a long petiole

FLOWER COLOURS
Cream, Green

Pseudopanax colensoi var. ternatus, Mt Cook. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Us. dioecious. Small multi-branched tree to 8 m tall, branchlets fleshy brittle. Leaves alternate, leaflets 3, palmate, sessile or subsessile on very short petiolules. Petioles 5-20 cm long, sheathing branchlet at base and with small erect stipule. Petiolules absent or very short, of terminal leaflet to 0-3 mm long, shorter on lateral leaflets, pale green. Leaflets narrow-ovate to broadly elliptic-oblong, cuneately narrowed at base, coriaceous, coarsely serrate-dentate in upper 1/2 - 2/3, acute to obtuse; midrib obvious above and below, lateral veins obscure; darker shiny green above; teminal lamina 5-17 x 2-11 cm, lateral leaflets decreasing in size. Inflorescence a terminal umbel; c. 8 primary rays (branchlets); 10-12 secondary rays; umbellules with 5-10 flowers in each. Calyx truncate or obscurely 5-toothed; flowers c. 5 mm diam.; petals 5, cream or greenish, ovate to triangular, acute; ovary 2-loculed, each containing 1 ovules; style branches 2. Fruit fleshy, 4-6 mm diam., style branches retained on an apical disc, dark purple when ripe. Seeds 2 per fruit, obviously wrinkled, 3.5-4.5 mm long.

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

SIMILAR TAXA
Often confused with Pseudopanax colensoi var. colensoi, which usually has 5 leaflets. Psudopanax discolor also has three leaflets but these are much smaller and thinner. The other varieties of Pseudopanax colensoi are distinguished their number of leaflets and distribution. The presence of a range of forms of probable hybrid arrangement at some sites can make identification difficult at times.

DISTRIBUTION
South Island. Apparently absent from Banks Peninsula

HABITAT
50m to 1000 m a.s.l. Cool moist forest and shrubland in damper regions

THREATS
Not Threatened, but leaflets often eaten by possums (Trichosurus vulpecula)

GENUS
Pseudopanax

FAMILY
Araliaceae

AUTHORITY
Pseudopanax colensoi var. ternatus Wardle

SYNONYMS
Neopanax colensoi (Hook.f.) Allan, Nothopanax colensoi (Hook.f.) Seem.

TAXONOMIC NOTES
For comments on the generic position of this taxon see under Pseudopanax colensoi (see also: Frodin, D.G.; Govaerts, R. 2003: World Checklist and Bibliography of Araliaceae, The Cromwell Press, European Union.)

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October-March

FRUITING
October-March

ETYMOLOGY
pseudopanax: False cure
colensoi: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

NVS CODE
PSECVT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 48

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Wardle, P. 1968. The taxonomy and distribution of the stipulate species of Pseudopanax in New Zealand. NZ J. Botany 6: 226-236
Allan, H.H. 1961. Flora of NZ, Vol. I. Government Printer, Wellington
Webb, C.J. & Simpson, M.J.A. 2001. Seeds of NZ gymnosperms and dicotyledons. Manuka Press, Christchurch.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Wardle (1968), Allan (1961) and Webb and Simpson (2001).
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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pseudopanax-colensoi-var-ternatus/

PDF DATE

25 May 2026