Freycinetia banksii

COMMON NAMES
kiekie

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Lianes - Monocots

FLOWER COLOURS
Green, White

Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 17/05/2013, Licence: CC BY.

Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 25/04/2017, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Densely branched, somewhat brittle, woody, climber producing numerous, weakly ascending to ascending dense cane-like stems from which roots freely emerge. Stems up to 40 mm diameter, deeply marked with scars of old leaves, usually branched in upper third, often somewhat interlacing such that the stems form dense tangles. Leaves densely tufted toward stem ends, spirally arranged; lamina 1.5-2 x 0.15-0.25 m; sheathing bases pale, otherwise dark green to green, usually yellow spotted, blemished or striped, strongly pleated, long attentuate, triangular in transverse section, margins and midrib distinctly though finely scabrid to spinulose. Inflorescences of 1-8 spadices, each simple and solitary in axil of 2-4 foliaceous bracts at stem apex; bracts thick, succulent towards base, white to purplish, edible (sweet tasting). Peduncle 10-40 mm, whitish, stout, glabrous; spadix 70-80 x 15-20 mm, pale yellow, cream, off white, cylindrical to slightly flattened, the axis hidden by tightly packed flowers such that individual flowers not easily determined. Male of several stamens each with a long filament, ovate anther and producing copious, confluent pollen, ovary rudimentary. Female with 6-12 purplish staminodes at base of flattened, vertically elongated ovary, 2-4 x 1 mm x 2 mm tall, long sides grooved between staminodes; stigmas 6-12, sessile, arranged around a long groove; locule narrow, placentae forming ridged around it. Fruits to 150 x 30 mm, brownish when ripe, sweet tasting (like caramel), borne on stiff woody peduncles. Individual fruits (phalanges) 8 x 2 x 10 mm, compressed laterally, thin-walled proximally, broadest 1/3 from base and almost woody towards apex. Seed 1 mm long, narrow, on a long, slender funicle.

SIMILAR TAXA
None. Stone (1973) made a combination at subspecies rank for F. banksii within the Norfolk Island endemic F. baueriana. Subsequent research, especially by Huyhn (1993), and added to and summarised by de Lange et al. (2005) shows quite clearly why both these taxa should be maintained at species rank. They differ significantly with respect to their phyllotaxis, leaf width, margin (entire in F. baueriana, scabrid in F. banksii), vein tessellation (abundant in F. baueriana, absent in F. banksii) colour (glaucous in F. baueriana, dark green with yellow flecks/spots in F. banksii), degree of pleating (absent in F. baueriana, present in F. banksii), and the floral bract colour (white to purplish in F. banksii, salmon pink to orange in F. baueriana) - as well as the over all growth habit.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North and South Islands to about the Clarence river in the east and Fiordland in the west. More common in the wetter parts of the South Island.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane forest, usually in wet sites although once established it can tolerate very dry conditions. Often coastal in karst country where it may form huge tangles that make access extremely difficult.

THREATS
Not Threatened - however, over large parts of its range it is experiencing reproductive failure due to rats which eat the flowers and fruits. Possums also eat the flowers and fruits but it has been shown that they help disperse the seeds. Freycinetia is one of the few New Zealand species with flowers said to be suited to bat pollination

GENUS
Freycinetia

FAMILY
Pandanaceae

AUTHORITY
Freycinetia banksii A.Cunn.

SYNONYMS
Freycinetia baueriana subsp. banksii (A.Cunn.) B.C.Stone

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
August - November

FRUITING
January - May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Viscid phalanges are dispersed by frugivory and attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easy from fresh seed and rooted pieces but tends to be quite to slow to establish. An attractive vine with beautiful edible flowers and fruits. It deserves to be more widely grown.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACU: Facultative Upland
Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE
The succulent bracts, flowers and sweet tasting fruits were eaten by Māori. The leaves were also used to weave coarse mats and vessels for temporarily holding food. Is a highly prized fibre for Maori weaving, used in fine whāriki (mats) and kete (baskets). It was also used for its inner fibres for binding toki (adzes).

ETYMOLOGY

freycinetia: Named by Charles Gaudichaud-Beaupré (1789-1854) after Admiral Louis de Freycinet (1779-1842) who was a 19th century French navigator and explorer. Freycinet was the commander of the circumglobal expedition on which Charles Gaudichaud-Beaupré (1789-1854) was the botanist and was the first to collect and describe the genus Freycinetia.
banksii: Named after Sir Joseph Banks, 1st Baronet, GCB, PRS (24 February 1743 - 19 June 1820) was an English naturalist, botanist and patron of the natural sciences.

NVS CODE

FREBAN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 62

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT 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.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange, P.J.; Gardner, R.O.; Sykes, W.R.; Crowcroft, G.M.; Cameron, E. K. Stalker, F.; Christian, M.L.; Braggins, J.E. 2005: Vascular flora of Norfolk Island: some additions and taxonomic notes. New Zealand Journal of Botany 43: 563-596.
Huyhn K-L 1993. Some new distinctive features between Freycinetia banksii Cunn. (Pandanaceae) of New Zealand and F. baueriana Endl. of Norfolk Is. Candollea 48: 501–510.
Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. II, Wellington, Government Printer.
Stone, B.C. 1973: Materials for a Monograph of Freycinetia Gaudich. XIV. On the Relation between F. banksii A. Cunn. of New Zealand and F. baueriana Endl. of Norfolk Island, with Notes on the Structure of the Seeds. New Zealand Journal of Botany 11: 241-246.
Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11: 285-309

ATTRIBUTION

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/freycinetia-banksii/

PDF DATE

25 May 2026