

Amphilophium crucigerum

COMMON NAMES

Monkeys comb, monkeys hairbrush

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

FLOWER COLOURS

White, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

This is a semi-evergreen vine from Mexico south to Argentina. It forms a slender climbing vine with hexagonal branches. Leaves 2-3 foliate, with terminal leaflet often replaced by tendril. Terminal racemes of fleshy white flowers, with yellow throat. The distinctive fruit is a large flattened woody capsule (up to 30 x 7 cm) that is very spiny, and contains winged seeds.

SIMILAR TAXA

It can be confused with an Argentine species. *P. cynchoides* which is also white with yellow streaks in the throat.

GENUS

Amphilophium

FAMILY

Bignoniaceae

AUTHORITY

Amphilophium crucigerum (L.) L.G.Lohmann

SYNONYMS

Pithecoctenium crucigerum

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

YEAR NATURALISED

2003

ORIGIN

This was not known to be in NZ prior to collection in Whanganui 2003.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Unknown

NOTES ON COMMON NAME

According to regional folklore, a ghostly yet beautiful woman called Xtabay appears in isolated settlements, combing her hair with the rough-surfaced fruits of this liana.



Pithecoctenium crucigerum. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Vine in tree canopy, beside Matarawa Stream, Sedgebrook St, Whanganui. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 18/01/2019, Licence: CC BY-NC.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Lohmann, L.G.; Taylor, C.M. 2014: A new generic classification of tribe Bignoniaceae. *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden* 99(3): 348–489.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/amphilophium-crucigerum/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026