

Ixerba brexioides

COMMON NAME

tawari, whakou (flowers)

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Strasburgeriaceae

AUTHORITY

Ixerba brexioides A.Cunn.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

Yes

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

IXEBRE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 50

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Bushy tree bearing narrow thick serrated dark green leaves and clusters of white flowers with a prominent green centre inhabiting the upper North Island. Leaves 6-16cm long by 1-4cm wide. Flowers 2.5-3.5cm wide. Fruit a green capsule, splits to reveal the black seeds on a fleshy orange and white base.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand, North Island (widespread from about Kaitaia south to Waitomo, Paeroa Range and Te Urewera).

HABITAT

Often but not exclusively an associate of kauri (*Agathis australis*) forest. Also common in montane cloud forest. Prefers shaded or sheltered sites, often near streams and in permanently damp ground. Can be locally abundant in some areas but otherwise it is rather sporadic in its occurrences,



Coromandel. November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Coromandel. November. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Small tree up to 10 m tall with spreading crown. Trunk 0.2-0.4 m diam., bark dark brown to grey-brown. Branchlets, leaves and inflorescences clad in fine pubescence when young. Petioles, stout, fleshy, 20 mm long. Leaves yellow-green to dark-green above, paler beneath, somewhat fleshy, distinctly leathery, 60-160 x 10-40 mm, lanceolate to elliptic or oblanceolate, apex acute to subacute, margins bluntly and coarsely serrated. Apex of each serration surmounted with a small gland. Juvenile leaves often reddish, linear-lanceolate. Inflorescence a terminal subumbellate 5-10-flowered panicle. Flowers 25-35 mm diam, furnished with plenty of nectar. Sepals broad-ovate, downy, 5-6 mm long; petals white, obovate-spathulate, clawed, 15-20 mm long, inserted below a 5-lobed disc; stamens 5 exerted, alternating with disc lobes; style twisted, 5-grooved. Capsule leathery, broadly ovoid, 5-celled, seeds orange, 5 mm long, very glossy.

SIMILAR TAXA

A very distinctive tree easily recognised by the leathery, somewhat fleshy, lanceolate leaves, whose serrations are glandular-tipped, large, showy, white flowers, and distinctive capsules which split to reveal rather large glossy black seeds.

FLOWERING

(September-) October-November (-December)

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

November - January (-March)

LIFE CYCLE

Arrilate seeds are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult to grow. It has been suggested that the species is mycorrhizal, and there is some evidence that if planted in association with *Griselinia littoralis*, *Ixerba* grows very easily.

ETYMOLOGY

ixerba: An anagram of *brexia*

brexioides: Like a *Brexia*, a South African shrub

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Ixerba has been placed in a range of families. Allan (1961) placed it in the Escalloniaceae, however this placement was at best doubtful, and so it was placed in 2008 into its own family the monogeneric *Ixerbaceae*. It was then, for a very short time New Zealand's only endemic vascular plant family. However, in 2009 the *Ixerbaceae* was merged with the New Caledonian *Strasburgeriaceae* (APG III 2009).

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (28 July 2005). Description based on Allan (1961), fresh material and herbarium specimens.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I. Wellington, Government Printer.

APG III 2009. An update of the Angiosperm Phylogeny Group classification of the orders and families of flowering plants: APG III. *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 161: 105-121.

Gardner, R.O. 1997. Notes on the tawari *Ixerba brexioides* (Escalloniaceae). *Auckland Botanical Society Journal*, 52: 45-47.

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

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ixerba-brexioides/>