

Lophomyrtus bullata

COMMON NAME

ramarama

SYNONYMS

Myrtus bullata Sol. ex A.Cunn. non Salis. nom. illegit., *Myrtus aotearoana* (E.C.Nelson) E.C.Nelson nom. illegit., *Lophomyrtus aotearoana* E.C.Nelson nom. illegit.

FAMILY

Myrtaceae

AUTHORITY

Lophomyrtus bullata Burret

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

LOPBUL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: DP

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Brownish- or reddish-green bushy shrub bearing pairs of rounded oval bulging shiny leaves that are much paler underneath. New growth fuzzy. Leaves 1.5-3cm long, nearly as wide as long. Flowers white, with many white filaments projecting from shiny white centre. Fruit red to black, on a long stalk.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island, South Island. Scarce in the South Island where it ranges to about North Canterbury and Greymouth

HABITAT

Coastal to montane forest and shrubland. Often a locally conspicuous component of the understorey of lowland podocarp riparian forest. *Lophomyrtus bullata* also occasionally grows on in suitable sites in slope forest, and in wetter areas is sometimes a common component of regenerating shrubland in cut over forest. Where it meets with rohu (*Lophomyrtus obcordata*) the hybrid *L. xralphii* is often commonly found. Sometimes *Lophomyrtus xralphii* is locally dominant occurring in places where ramarama is scarce or has seemingly died out.



Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 10/07/2002, Licence: CC BY.



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

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub or tree up to 6 m tall or more. **Trunk** slender, up to 0.2 m diameter. **Bark** reddish, fibrous, flaking in small irregular shards, underbark pink. **Branches** numerous, erect, compactly branched, branchlets initially 4-angled becoming terete with age, rather brittle, finely hairy, hairs ± persistent. **Leaves** opposite, coriaceous, finely hirsute when young (hairs somewhat stiffly erect to sericeous, appressed, caducous), maturing glabrous, surface minutely glandular-punctate, oil glands colourless, leaf lamina and petiole decurrent with branchlet; petiole 2–5–(10) mm long, rather brittle; leaf lamina 15–30–(50) × 10–15–(40) mm, broadly ovate to suborbicular, bullate, apex obtuse or acute and then often minutely apiculate, adaxially dark green to yellow green, mottled and/or spotted with red, maroon or purple-black circular blemishes, abaxially pink or red-tinged. **Flowers** 4-merous, 12–14 mm diameter, borne in axillary, solitary monads, on slender, 12–14–(18) mm long, hirsute pedicels. **Hypanthium** subturbinate, not extending beyond ovary summit, calyx lobes 4, 1.5–2.2 mm long, persistent, spreading, elliptic-oblong, obtuse to subacute. **Petals** 8–10 × 6–9 mm, suborbicular, white, margins entire to slightly irregular, ciliate, oil glands colourless. **Stamens** 80–100–(200 or more), free, in 4 (or more) weakly defined whorls, filaments 8–12 mm long, anthers cream, dorsifixed, latrorse. **Ovary** inferior, 2–3-locular, ovules numerous, in a single row on each linear placenta. **Style** 10–12 mm long, slender, white, stigma capitate, scarcely dilated. **Fruit** a broadly ovoid, dark red or black 6–8 mm long berry. **Seeds** numerous, reniform, 2.7–5.5 mm diameter, testa dark brown, glossy ± smooth, very hard. Seed description modified from Webb & Simpson (2001).

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to the Myrtaceae of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily recognised by the suborbicular, bullate (i.e. 'bubbly') usually red-tinged and or mottled leaves.

FLOWERING

November–March

FLOWER COLOURS

White

FRUITING

January–June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Can also be grown from semi-hardwood and hardwood cuttings. Ramarama (*Lophomyrtus bullata*) is an attractive and remarkably hardy shrub that does well when planted in a semi-shaded site, in a free draining, moist, fertile soil enriched with leaf litter and compost. It is also surprisingly drought tolerant. On account of its bullate ("bubbly") leaves and conspicuous flowers ramarama is a very attractive plant that is well worth growing. Ramarama is, however, rarely available from garden centres—although the hybrid swarm between it and rohotu (*Lophomyrtus obcordata* (*L. xralphii*)) including a hideous array of variegated horrors are quite commonly available and grown.

THREATS

Seriously threatened by the arrival of myrtle rust in NZ, resulting in a change of conservation status in 2017 (de Lange et al 2018). To date, ramarama and its hybrids have been found with a higher rate of myrtle rust infection than other Myrtaceae in NZ. Learn more at myrtlerust.org.nz.

ETYMOLOGY

lophomyrtus: From the Greek lophos (crest) and myrtus (myrtle)

bullata: Blistered

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 9 February 2011. Seed description modified from Webb & Simpson (2001).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange PJ, Rolfe JR, Barkla JW, Courtney SP, Champion PD, Perrie LR, Beadel SM, Ford KA, Breitwieser I, Schonberger I, Hindmarsh-Walls R, Heenan PB, Ladley K. 2018. Conservation status of New Zealand indigenous vascular plants, 2017. *New Zealand Threat Classification Series 22*. Department of Conservation, Wellington, NZ. 82 p. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/science-and-technical/nztcs22entire.pdf>

Webb CJ, Simpson MJA. 2001. *Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons*. Manuka Press, Christchurch. 428 p.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lophomyrtus-bullata/>