

Metrosideros carminea

COMMON NAME

carmine rātā

SYNONYMS

Metrosideros diffusa Hook.f.

FAMILY

Myrtaceae

AUTHORITY

Metrosideros carminea W.R.B.Oliv.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

METCAR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, De

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Woody long-climbing vine. Mature plants only reproductive. Juvenile foliage hairy, with young growth often pinkish. Adult leaves more or less circular, dark glossy green above, pale green below, surfaces without any obvious glandular spotting. Flowers carmine borne in dense, terminal, fluffy, clusters.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (from Te Pahi south to Taranaki in the west and Mahia Peninsula in the east).

HABITAT

Coastal to montane (mainly coastal to lowland). A vine of closed forest and forest margins (often along water ways and on ridge lines, especially on rock outcrops and cliff faces).



Carmine rata. Photographer: Department of Conservation, Licence: Public domain.



Metrosideros carminea. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Vine up to 15 m (usually less). Growth dimorphic, juvenile and climbing vines sparingly branched, mature (adult - reproductive state) heavily branched. **Bark** dark brown to grey, ± tessellated, and flaking in tabular shards.

Branchlets terete, finely pubescent. **Leaves** close-set, coriaceous, petiolate; petioles 1–3 mm. long; lamina of juveniles 10–20 × 8–18 mm, suborbicular, orbicular to broadly ovate, apices obtuse to subacute; adaxially green to dark green, abaxially paler (young foliage (and branchlet growing points) usually pink-tinged), both surfaces finely to distinctly pubescent, hairs pinkish, oil glands conspicuous abaxially not punctate; adult lamina 15–35 × 7–30 mm, elliptic-oblong, ovate-oblong to broad ovate, apices obtuse to subacute, adaxially dark green and glossy, adaxially paler, ± glossy, ± glabrous. **Inflorescences** in axillary and/or terminal few- to many-flowered cymose botyria crowded toward apex of branchlets (often obscuring the foliage); peduncles and pedicels finely pubescent, peduncles 20–60 mm long, pedicels 5–10 mm long. **Hypanthium** urceolate or globose, initially fleshy, finely pubescent, ± glabrescent; calyx lobes 1.8–2.3 mm long, oblong, subacute. **Petals** 5 × 4 mm, caducous, suborbicular, carmine, shortly clawed, margins ± unevenly crenulate to indistinctly toothed or undulose; stamens numerous 10–15 mm long, carmine. **Capsule** 6–9 mm diameter, subglobose to globose, 3–(4)-valved, exserted, ± woody, dark brown to brown-black when mature.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to the Myrtaceae of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

Adult vines are easily recognised when flowering by the profusion of carmine flowers - quite unlike any other New Zealand rata vine. However, this species is most often found as juveniles, and these have a superficial resemblance to *Metrosideros perforata*. From that species *M. carminea* can be distinguished by the branch tips and young emergent leaves which are very hairy and tinged pink. Both species have prominent oil glands on their leaves but in *M. carminea* these are never pitted (punctate) like those of *M. perforata*.

FLOWERING

August–November

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink

FRUITING

January–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces. Also grown from semi-hardwood cuttings. Indeed adult plants are often propagated from cuttings and while these don't climb they form an excellent small shrub suitable for rockeries and tub or pot culture. *Metrosideros carminea* is an excellent vine for growing up walls and rock faces, doing best if its roots are planted in a free draining, humus enriched, moist soil, and the plants allowed to climb up into the sun. *Metrosideros carminea* is frost sensitive and young vines will need to be carefully nurtured until they are well established.

THREATS

Metrosideros carminea is most often found as juveniles, in part because the adult vines (at least in dense forest) are often overlooked as they occur high up in the canopy. In some areas adult vines are heavily browsed by possums. When myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) was detected in New Zealand (May 2017) the conservation status was upgraded as a precautionary measure to 'Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable' because, on best advice, it was believed that no indigenous Myrtaceae had resistance to the myrtle rust disease (de Lange et al. 2018). Myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) is an invasive fungus that threatens native myrtle species. Learn more myrtlerust.org.nz.

ETYMOLOGY

metrosideros: Iron heart

carminea: Carmine or red-coloured

WHERE TO BUY

Commonly available from most retail nurseries, though often sold as adult cutting grown plants only (these will not climb).

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (5 January 2013). Description adapted from Allan (1961) supplemented with observations made from herbarium and fresh material.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan HH. 1961. Flora of New Zealand, Volume I. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Psilopsida, Lycopsidea, Filicopsida, Gymnospermae, Dicotyledones. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 1085 p.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/metrosideros-carminea/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/metrosideros-carminea/>