

# Metrosideros colensoi

## COMMON NAME

rātā

## SYNONYMS

*Metrosideros pendens* Colenso, *Metrosideros colensoi* Hook.f. var. *colensoi*, *Metrosideros colensoi* var. *pendens* (Colenso) Kirk

## FAMILY

Myrtaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Metrosideros colensoi* Hook.f.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lianes & Related Trailing Plants - Dicotyledons

## NVS CODE

METCOL

## 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. Adult branches pendent. Adult leaves green, finely hairy, close-set and overlapping, sharp-tipped, surfaces without any obvious glandular spotting. Flowers terminal, fluffy, white or pink.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (from central Northland south), South Island (Nelson and Marlborough to Westland and southern Marlborough / North Canterbury (Napenape)).

## HABITAT

Lowland to montane forest (particularly a vine seen in riparian and alluvial forest). Especially common in limestone areas on rock outcrops, in gorges, cliff faces and around cave entrances.



Oct 2006. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Oct 2006. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Slender to very slender vine up to 10 m tall. **Bark** grey to pale grey, ± tessellated, and flaking in tabular shards. **Initial stems** sparingly branched but soon much-branched, widely spreading, apices trailing and pendent. **Branchlets** subterete, pilose-pubescent (indument in mixtures or fine, short and long pilose brownish hairs). **Leaves** not markedly dimorphic, close-set to overlapping (± imbricate), submembranous to subcoriaceous, petiolate, ± subsessile; petioles 1–3 mm long, subterete; juvenile lamina 4–10 × 2–8 mm, ovate-lanceolate, base cuneate to almost truncate, apex acute to acuminate, initially yellow-green, adaxially maturing to green, abaxially paler, both surfaces finely covered in minute oil glands, and initially densely pubescent, ± glabrescent; adult lamina 8–20 × 5–20 mm, otherwise similar. **Inflorescences** terminal and lateral, white (rarely pink), comprising small, few-flowered cymes; peduncles and pedicels pubescent, peduncles 10–30 mm long, pedicels up to 3 mm long; hypanthia 5 mm long, narrowly-urceolate or -subglobose to ± funnelform, pubescent, hypanthium rim exceeding disc, calyx lobes 1.5–2.0 mm long, narrow deltoid, acute to acuminate, initially forward projecting, spreading with age. **Petals** 1.5–2.2 × 1.5–2.2 mm, orbicular, not or only scarcely exceeding calyx lobes. **Stamens** numerous, filaments 8–12 mm long, anthers yellow. **Style** 10–14 mm long, stigma capitate. **Capsule** 4–6 mm diameter, narrowly urceolate to subglobose, externally 3-ribbed, 3-valved. **Seeds** 0.6–1.1 mm long, narrowly elliptic, narrowly obovate or oblong, apex usually curved orange to orange-brown, unfilled seeds dark orange-brown.

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to the Myrtaceae of New Zealand

## SIMILAR TAXA

Readily distinguished from other similar small, white-flowered rata (*Metrosideros diffusa* and *M. perforata*) by the widely spreading, pendant branches, softly hairy, close-set, overlapping, ovate-lanceolate, acute to acuminate leaves (without obvious oil glands) and terminal, white to pink inflorescences.

## FLOWERING

August–October

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

## FRUITING

December–April

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Although a beautiful species, *M. colensoi* is not commonly cultivated and it has a reputation for being difficult. Like all other climbing rātā it can be grown from rooted pieces and from semi-hardwood cuttings. However like all *Metrosideros*, cuttings can be fickle to strike. This species, once established is very hardy and tolerant of a range of conditions. The long drooping (pendent) branches and terminal clusters of white fluffy flowers are especially attractive when specimens are planted to grow up a wall or along a fence.

## THREATS

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](http://myrtlerust.org.nz).

## ETYMOLOGY

**metrosideros**: Iron heart

**colensoi**: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 – 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (6 January 2013). Description from herbarium specimens and fresh material.

### **NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION**

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Metrosideros colensoi* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

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

### **MORE INFORMATION**

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