

Pittosporum pimeleoides subsp. majus

SYNONYMS

Pittosporum michiei Allan; *Pittosporum pimeleoides* var. *major* Cheeseman, *Pittosporum pimeleoides* subsp. *maius* (Cheeseman) R.C.Cooper orthographic variant,

FAMILY

Pittosporaceae

AUTHORITY

Pittosporum pimeleoides subsp. *majus* (Cheeseman) R.C.Cooper

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 24

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: OL

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: OL, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, ST, OL

2004 | Range Restricted

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Rare much-branched low-growing shrub with whorls of rounded leaves and red-striped yellow flowers and 6–12mm long capsules inhabiting the northern tip of the North Island. Leaves 9–30mm long by 4.5–13mm wide. Fruit splitting into two to show the black sticky seeds in orange pith.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Hikurua / de Surville Cliffs and adjacent plateau).

HABITAT

An ultramafic endemic naturally confined to the 120-ha exposure of serpentinite at the North Cape (Otou) – Hikurua / de Surville Cliffs, Te Paki. In that habitat it is very common in low scrub and at the bases of talus slopes on the cliffs proper. It is also present on the plateau, where it is less common, presumably because of the once frequent fires that swept that area.



Photo by John Smith-Dodsworth.
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In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe,
Date taken: 19/07/2007, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Much branched, gynodioecious, decumbent, prostrate, trailing and spreading gynodioecious shrub 0.1–0.6 m tall; confined to ultramafic substrates. Usually multi-trunked from the ground, branches and branchlets slender, wiry, pliant, spreading, arching and layering on contact with soil; coloured grey-brown; branchlets similar but at first densely clad in greyish-white to brown tomentum becoming glabrate with age. **Leaves** alternate, in distinct whorls (semi-verticillate). **Petioles** up to 5 mm long, hairy. **Lamina** 9–30 × 4.5–5–(13), pale green, red-green or dark green above, paler beneath, broadly elliptic, apex acuminate or obtuse, base attenuate, margins entire or finely crenulate, surfaces sparsely hairy with ciliolate margins when young, becoming glabrate, coriaceous. **Flowers** usually terminal, 4–12 fascicled. **Pedicels** 2–9 mm, filiform, puberulent, accrescent in fruit, subtended by a whorl of leaves and several 2–3 mm long, caducous, glabrous, ciliolate bud scales. **Sepals** 4.5–5 × 0.5–1 mm, linear, acuminate, glabrous. **Petals** 11–12 mm, yellow with a central or margin red stripe, rarely completely yellow or cream, linear, acuminate, fused in a tube to about half way, then spreading and reflexed. **Stamens** 2.5–6.5 mm, anthers 0.5–2 mm. **Ovary** 1–2 × 1–1.5 mm, villous, style 1.5–3.5 mm. **Stigma** capitate, 2-lobed or truncate. **Capsules** 2-valved, 6–12 × 4–6 mm, green at first brown when mature, ovoid, acuminate, coriaceous, initially covered in long grey hairs otherwise glabrate. **Mucilage** yellow to dark orange. **Seeds** 5–18, glossy black, of irregular shape.

SIMILAR TAXA

Pittosporum pimeleoides subsp. *pimeleoides*, which is a highly variable plant with respect to leaf length and width. In its typical form it has narrowly lanceolate to linear-lanceolate leaves, an erect growth habit, and smaller flowers. However some forms may have broader leaves and a more spreading, semi-decumbent habit. These forms can be locally common in parts of eastern Northland, they differ from subsp. *majus* by their erect to semi-erect sprawling stems, somewhat longer leaves, and smaller flowers.

FLOWERING

(May)–July–September

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, Yellow

FRUITING

Present throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from seed which germinates within 3–6 months of sowing. Also strikes well from semi-hardwood cuttings. Established plants can be easily layered. Despite its natural restriction to ultramafic rocks it grows well in any free draining soil. Prefers full sun. Should not be planted near *P. pimeleoides* subsp. *pimeleoides* because of the risk of hybridisation.

THREATS

Pittosporum pimeleoides var. *majus* naturally occupies a small area at North Cape so any population decline is of concern. Although *P. pimeleoides* var. *majus* is difficult to survey because of its trailing growth habit, a decline in the population has been observed. Possums are a major threat and scale insects are also a problem.

ETYMOLOGY

pittosporum: Pitch seed

pimeleoides: Like a pimelea

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Records of this subspecies occurring further south at the Whangaroa Harbour refer to a wide-leaved semi-erect, sometimes sprawling form of *P. pimeleoides* subsp. *pimeleoides*. This variant, locally common in some places around that harbour tends to form an erect bush with occasional sprawling branches in cultivation. It has flower dimensions typical of subsp. *pimeleoides* (which is a very variable entity).

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 30 August 2006. Description adapted from Cooper (1956).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Cooper RC. 1956. The Australian and New Zealand species of *Pittosporum*. *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden* 43: 87–188. <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/26841965#page/95/mode/1up>

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pittosporum-pimeleoides-subsp-majus/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pittosporum-pimeleoides-subsp-majus/>