

Pseudopanax laetus

SYNONYMS

Panax arboreus var. *laetus* Kirk, *Nothopanax laetus* (Kirk) Cheeseman, *Neopanax laetus* (Kirk) Philipson

FAMILY

Araliaceae

AUTHORITY

Pseudopanax laetus (Kirk) Allan

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

PSELAE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 48

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: RF

2004 | Gradual Decline

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Bushy shrub with large hand-shaped leaves on red stalks

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (from Coromandel to inland Gisborne and Taranaki).

HABITAT

Montane forest.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Small multi-branched tree to 5 m tall, branchlets brittle. **Leaves** alternate, leaflets 5–7, palmate, on short petiolules. **Petiole** to 25 cm long, sheathing branchlet at base, stipules present, purplish red. **Petiolules** stout, purplish red or leaflets subsessile. **Leaflets** obovate- to cuneate-oblong, thick and coriaceous, green above, paler below, margin coarsely dentate-serrate in distal half, acute or acuminate to subacute; midveins and main lateral veins obvious above and below; terminal lamina 12–25 × 5–10 cm or more, lateral leaflets smaller. **Inflorescence** a terminal, compound umbel, flowers sometimes subracemose on secondary rays; primary rays (branchlets) 10–15; 15–20 secondary rays. **Calyx** truncate or obscurely 5-toothed; petals ovate-oblong, acute. **Ovary** 2-loculed, each containing 1 ovules; style branches 2, spreading. **Fruit** fleshy, purple, c. 5 mm diameter, laterally compressed, style branches retained on an apical disc. **Seeds** 2 per fruit, broadly-ovate or oblong, wrinkled, 3.4–4.7–(5.1) mm long.



Close up, *Pseudopanax laetus* mature foliage, Upper Kaueranga Valley. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Pseudopanax laetus close up of inflorescence with flowers during male phase, Ex Cult. Puhoi. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Date taken: 30/09/2006, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

The dark red petioles and large leaflets of this species are distinctive

FLOWERING

(August)–September–November

FRUITING

October–February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from fresh seed. Can be grown from semi-hardwood cuttings. Very fast growing and tolerant of a wide range of soil types and moisture regimes but dislikes very dry soils. Best in damp soils.

THREATS

This species is highly palatable to browsing animals. Subsequently it is usually only found in cliff refugia or other similar sites inaccessible to browsing animals. Possums seriously damage plants and have been responsible for its near extinction in some parts.

This plant has naturalised out of its natural range in New Zealand and is weedy in parts of Southern New Zealand including Invercargill and Stewart Island. Caution should be exercised when planting it out of its natural range.

ETYMOLOGY

pseudopanax: False cure

laetus: From the Latin laetus 'bright'

WHERE TO BUY

Common in cultivation and sold by most plant nurseries.

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

This species was transferred back to *Neopanax* Allan by: Frodin & Govaerts (2003).

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Allan (1961), Eagle (2006), Webb and Simpson (2001).

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.
- Eagle A. 2006. Eagle's complete trees and shrubs of New Zealand. Te Papa Press, Wellington, NZ. 2-volume boxed set: vol. 1 pp 1–529; vol. 2: pp 532–1114.
- Frodin DG, Govaerts R. 2003. World Checklist and Bibliography of Araliaceae, The Cromwell Press, European Union. 444 p.
- Webb CJ, Simpson MJA. 2001. Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons. Manuka Press, Christchurch. 428 p.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/pseudopanax-laetus/>