

Rhopalostylis baueri

COMMON NAME

Kermadec nīkau (N.Z. only)

SYNONYMS

Areca sapida Endl., *Kentia sapida* (Endl.) Mart., *Kentia baueri* Seem., *Eora baueri* (H.Wendl. et Drude) O.F.Cook., *Rhopalostylis cheesemanii* Beccari, *R. baueri* var. *cheesemanii* (Beccari) Sykes

FAMILY

Areaceae

AUTHORITY

Rhopalostylis baueri (Seem.) H.Wendl. et Drude

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Monocotyledons

NVS CODE

RHOBAU

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 32

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, SO

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: TO

2004 | Range Restricted

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Palm to 15 m tall with a ringed trunk and 3 m-long leaves inhabiting Raoul Island in the Kermadec Islands. Leaves with multiple long narrow leaflets (to 1 m long) closely-spaced along the central stem. Flowers pinkish, in multiple spikes at the top of trunk. Fruit red.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand known only from Raoul Island (Kermadec Islands group). Also on Norfolk Island, its type locality.

HABITAT

Abundant in both dry and wet forest types on Raoul Island where it sometimes is the main canopy dominant.



Raoul Island. Photographer: Bec Stanley, Licence: CC BY-SA.



Rhopalostylis baueri. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Trunk up to 15 m tall, and 0.35 m wide, green to dark green fading to grey with age between rather closely spaced leaf-scars; crown-shaft to 0.80 m long, smooth and green, slightly bulging. **Leaf** to 3 m long, usually dark green; leaflets closely set, ascending sharply, up to 1 m long and 40 mm wide. **Spathes** c. 380 × 150 mm, between pink and yellow, smooth, falling as first flowers open. Inflorescence: Ultimate branches of inflorescence to 300 mm long, c. 15 mm diameter with buds on, at first pale cream-coloured; flower-buds tightly packed. **Sepals** short, the longest one in male rarely = petals. **Petals** white or pink. **Fruit** c. 13 × 12 mm, subglobose to globose brick-red. **Seed** almost spherical, tightly invested in pale fawn endocarp which is marked by several vascular strands curving ± obliquely from hilum and only a few running longitudinally; hilum a broad band from the slightly flattened chalazal area to a pronounced papilla beside the micropyle.

SIMILAR TAXA

Rhopalostylis sapida is a very variable species. It is best distinguished from *R. baueri* by its elliptic-oblong, smaller (mostly up to 7 mm diameter) fruit. While many New Zealand populations of *R. sapida* have narrower leaflets, some, especially those in the Hauraki Gulf and on the Chatham Islands have equally broad leaflets and fruit dimensions comparable to *R. baueri*. *Rhopalostylis sapida* is absent from the indigenous range of *R. baueri*.

FLOWERING

December–January

FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White

FRUITING

December–January

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Seed should be soaked in water to remove flesh and then sown over a damp peat/coarse sand mix and left in a shaded spot (ideally in a mister) and ignored. Fruit may take up to a year to germinate. Frost tender. Plants resent root disturbance so they should be planted in a sheltered semi-shaded site and then left alone.

THREATS

In the New Zealand part of its range it does not face any specific threats. However, it is known only from Raoul Island, and so qualifies as At Risk – Naturally Uncommon. On Norfolk, while common it occupies a very reduced range in the centre of that island. There the species is threatened to some extent by rats which eat the fruit and germinating seedlings.

ETYMOLOGY

rhopalostylis: Club style

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally sold by retail plant nurseries and most specialist native plant nurseries, usually under the names *R. cheesemanii* and *R. baueri* var. *cheesemanii*. Most material sold here as *R. baueri* is from Norfolk Island.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Rhopalostylis baueri* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/rhopalostylis-baueri/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/rhopalostylis-baueri/>