



Planchonella costata

Common Name(s):

tawapou

Current Threat Status (2012):

At Risk - Relict

Distribution:

Indigenous. Norfolk Island and New Zealand where it found in the North Island only from Te Paki south to the Manukau and Coromandel Peninsula after which it occurs in scattered sites as far south as East Cape in the East and Kawhia Harbour in the west. Some of these southerly occurrences are associated with Pa sites, and as the glossy seeds were used as necklaces by Maori it is possible that this species was planted over some parts of its southern North Island range. Tawapou is common on rodent-free offshore islands in the Hauraki Gulf, around the Coromandel Peninsula, Great Barrier Island, and on the Mokohinau, Poor Knights, Hen & Chickens and Three Kings Islands.

Habitat:

Strictly coastal where it is usually a minor (rarely dominant) component of coastal forest on rocky headlands and talus slopes, windswept ridge-lines, forested islands and islets. Usually associated with pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*), puriri (*Vitex lucens*), karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*), whau (*Entelea arborescens*), kowhai (*Sophora chathamica*), tawaroa (the northern wide-leaved form of *Beilschmedia tawa*) and on offshore islands such as the Three Kings, Poor Knights, Mokohinau Islands with coastal maire (*Nestegis apetala*), *Streblus* spp., and *Hoheria* spp.

Features*:

Tree up to 18 m. tall; trunk up to 1 m diameter; bark firm (not flaking), greyish-white to grey-brown, finely furrowed; branches numerous, erect and scarcely spreading, closely packed; branchlets clad in appressed hairs and \pm lactescent (exuding amilky fluid). Leaves intially pubescent (pubescence comprising fine, matted greyish to grey-brown hairs), lactescent, petioles 8-12 mm long, rather stout and rigid. Lamina 40-150 \times 20-50 mm, yellow-green to dark green, elliptic-to obovate-oblong, entire, very coriaceous, adaxially lustrous, when mature glabrous except on abaxial midrib, apex obtuse or retuse, base cuneately narrowed. Lateral veins numerous, set at a rather wide angle to midrib. Flowers axillary and/or cauliflorous, solitary or rarely 2 together, 3.8-6.2 mm diameter; [peduncles 6-12 mm long, rather stout and rigid \pm curved; calyx 4(-5)-toothed, teeth narrowly to broadly ovate, pubescent, obtuse; hairs centrally affixed. Corolla greenish to yellow-green, slightly $>$ calyx, deeply 4-5-partite; lobes obovate-oblong, 3.8-4.1 mm. long. Stamens 5, filaments thick; staminodes 5, subulate. Ovary 4-5-loculed. Fruit fleshy, 25-50 mm long, ovoid to ellipsoid, maturing dark purple-black, dark red or orange-yellow. Seeds 1-4, 22-48 mm long, curved, rather hard, testa black, glossy.

Flowering:

September - November

Fruiting:

December - June

Threats:

Not Threatened

*Attribution:

Description adapted from Allan (1961) by P. J. de Lange.

References and further reading:

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I, Wellington, Government Printer.

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=2227



Caption: Te Paki. Oct 2009.

Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe



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