

## NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

# *Agonis flexuosa* (Willd.) Sweet

### Common Names

agonis, Australian willow myrtle, peppermint myrtle, peppermint tree, peppermint willow myrtle, peppermint willow, river myrtle, Swan River peppermint, Western Australian myrtle, Western Australian peppermint, willow myrtle

### Origin

Australia: indigenous to south-western coastal regions of Western Australia.

### Cultivation

In New Zealand cultivated as a landscape tree of parks and gardens; occasionally naturalised from nearby planted specimens. *Agonis flexuosa* 'Nana' (dwarf peppermint tree) is also cultivated in New Zealand and can be grown as a hedge.

### Distribution

Scattered records from mainly urban areas in the North Island and northern South Island of New Zealand.

### Distinguishing Features

- Weeping branches, zig-zagged leafy stems.
- Leaves long, to 150 mm, narrow and pendulous.
- Crushed leaves smell of peppermint.
- Flowers and fruit clustered.

### Habit

Tree, growing to 10(–15) m tall. *Agonis flexuosa* 'Nana' is a compact shrubby selection that grows 1.2–1.8 m tall.

### Bark and Stem/Trunk

Bark fibrous, brown; branchlets usually almost hairless, often zig-zagged, changing direction at each node.

### Leaves

Adult leaves alternate, narrowly elliptic or narrowly ovate to sickle-shaped, 18–135(–150) mm long, 3.5–12 mm wide, pendulous, same colour on upper and lower surface; leaf blade flat, sometimes slightly twisted, hairless and surfaces not puckered; margins entire; tips pointed; leaf stalks absent or to 5 mm long.

### Flowers

Flowers in clusters, individual flowers  $\pm$  8–12 mm in diam., shortly stalked; petals 5, white; sepals 5, tips free, hairy, persistent; stamens white, shorter than petals. Main flowering period: spring to early summer.

### Fruit

Fruit dry, individual fruits tightly clustered into round balls, each fruit 3–4-locular, 2.5–4 mm wide. Seeds are mostly released upon the death of a branch.

### Similar Species

The weeping branches, zig-zag towards the tips, bearing long, narrow and pendulous leaves that smell of peppermint when crushed, together with clustered flowers and fruit are unique to this species in New Zealand.

### Notes

*Agonis flexuosa* is susceptible to myrtle rust (caused by *Austropuccinia psidii*).

Two varieties are recognised: *A. flexuosa* var. *flexuosa* and *A. flexuosa* var. *latifolia*; along with several cultivars. Taller growing selections are attributable to *A. flexuosa* var. *flexuosa*, whereas *A. flexuosa* var. *latifolia* has a smaller, usually shrubby habit, smaller (less than 45 mm long), often twisted leaves, and fewer (15–20) stamens. *Agonis flexuosa* 'Nana' is likely a selection of *A. flexuosa* var. *latifolia*.

*Agonis* is a genus of four species endemic to Western Australia. *Agonis flexuosa* is the only one that can grow to tree size; the others generally grow as tall shrubs.

### External Links

- CitSciHub
- Flora of New Zealand Online
- GBIF
- iNaturalist NZ
- NZPCN
- Plants of South Eastern New South Wales
- VicFlora: Flora of Victoria

- Weeds of Australia: Biosecurity Queensland

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