

## NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

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# *Astartea fascicularis* (Labill.) DC.

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### Common Names

false baeckea

### Origin

Australia: south-western coastal regions of Western Australia.

### Cultivation

Occasionally cultivated in New Zealand; recorded as naturalising into sand dunes near Whangamata but not found there recently.

### Distribution

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

### Distinguishing Features

- Young stems pink-red in colour and with ridges or wings.
- Crushed stems and leaves have a spicy smell.
- Leaves bundled.
- Stamens fused at the base.
- Stamens bundled in groups of 5–10, opposite sepals.

### Habit

Upright or spreading shrub, to 1.5 m tall.

### Bark and Stem/Trunk

Bark thin, pinkish when young, older stems with brown smooth bark. Young stems pink-red in colour, with ridges or wings. Single or multi-stemmed.

### Leaves

Adult leaves opposite, often bundled into clusters (fascicles), linear, 4–10(–12) mm long, 0.5–1 mm wide, same colour on upper and lower surfaces, slightly waxy; leaf blade flat, hairless and surfaces not puckered; margins entire; tips pointed; leaf stalks absent or  $\pm 1$  mm long. Leaves give off a spicy fragrance when crushed.

### Flowers

Flowers solitary in leaf axils (but the leaves are opposite, so flowers may appear 'paired' along the branches), flowers arranged facing upwards along the stems,  $\pm 8$ –11 mm in diam., stalks long, petals 5, rounded, white to pale-pink, often tinged with a deeper pink at the base, and with a green eye; sepals 5, persistent, ridged, tips free, hairless; stamens 30–40, bundled into groups of 5–10, opposite sepals, white, shorter than petals. Main flowering period: summer to autumn.

### Fruit

Fruit dry, 3-locular, 2.5–3 mm wide.

### Similar Species

*Erica lusitanica*, Spanish heath, widely naturalised, is superficially similar in habit, and also with needle-like leaves to  $\pm 10$  mm long, but the flowers are small, tubular bells of fused light pink-to-white petals, unlike the broader, open flower with 5 free petals of *A. fascicularis*.

### Notes

*Astartea* is a genus of 22 species endemic to south-western Western Australia.

### External Links

- Australia's Flora: Growing Native Plants
- Flora of New Zealand Online
- GBIF
- iNaturalist NZ
- NZPCN

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