

NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

Eucalyptus pulchella Desf.

Common Names

narrow-leaved peppermint, white peppermint, white peppermint gum

Origin

Australia: hilly country of south-eastern Tasmania.

Cultivation

In New Zealand occasionally cultivated in parks or forestry trials; a few records of naturalisation from nearby specimens.

Distribution

Occasional throughout New Zealand.

Distinguishing Features

- A small to medium-sized tree to 20 m tall, with smooth bark throughout on smaller trees but on larger trees rough, fibrous, grey to grey-brown bark for about 1–2 m of trunk; smooth bark white, cream, yellow, pink and grey, shedding in ribbons.
- Adult leaves usually dark green, same colour above and below, glossy, alternate, stalked, with a long narrow blade, to 120 mm long and 10 mm wide, base tapering to leaf stalk, tip tapering to a fine point; juvenile leaves opposite and stalkless for 5 to 8 nodes, then like small adult leaves.
- Flowers in clusters of 9–15 or more, in leaf axils; mature buds short-stalked, club-shaped, to 6 mm long and 3 mm wide, green, cap rounded; flowers white.
- Fruit usually short-stalked or rarely stalkless woody capsule, usually crowded, cup-shaped to truncated globose, to 8 mm long and 7 mm wide, disc slightly raised, level or slightly descending inside the rim, valves usually 4, near rim level or enclosed.

Habit

A small to medium-sized tree to 20 m tall.

Bark and Stem/Trunk

Bark smooth throughout on smaller trees but on larger trees rough, fibrous, grey to grey-brown for about 1–2 m of trunk; smooth bark white, cream, yellow, pink and grey, shedding in ribbons. Hairs and adventitious roots absent. Young stems rounded in cross-section, warty.

Leaves

Adult leaves alternate, stalked, blade narrow with parallel sides, 33–120 mm long, 3–10 mm wide, base tapering to stalk, tip tapering to a fine point, glossy, usually dark green, same colour above and below, hairless, side-veins at an acute angle to the midrib, or obscure, vein reticulation not visible or very sparse, intramarginal vein parallel to and just within margin; oil glands present, strong peppermint smell when leaves are crushed; leaf stalk 2–10 mm long.

Juvenile leaves opposite and stalkless for 5 to 8 nodes, then alternate, short-stalked, narrow-lanceolate to parallel-sided, 20–35 mm long, 2–4 mm wide, green.

Flowers

Flowers in clusters of 9–15 or more, in leaf axils, stalk of cluster angular in cross-section, 2–8 mm long. Mature buds free, club-shaped, 3–6 mm long, 2–3 mm wide, green, cap usually rounded, flowers (stamens) white; in mature open flowers, petals and sepals absent. Main flowering period: late spring, summer and early autumn.

Fruit

Capsules woody, rarely stalkless, usually on stalks to 3 mm long, usually crowded, cup-shaped to truncated globose, 4–8 mm long, 5–7 mm wide; disc slightly raised, level or slightly descending inside the rim, valves usually 4, near rim level or enclosed.

Similar Species

Eucalyptus tenuiramis and *E. pulchella* both have smooth bark throughout, sometimes with some rough bark retained around the base. However, *E. pulchella* may have some ribbons in the crown, and the leaves are dark green, whereas the crown of *E. tenuiramis* is likely to have opposite, stalked, waxy grey-white intermediate leaves as well as green to blue-green, alternate adult leaves. Both *E. pulchella* and *E. tenuiramis* have flower buds in clusters of 9–15 or more, but *E. tenuiramis* has buds that are waxy green-white, smooth or minutely warty only on the cap, whereas buds of *E. pulchella* are green, with a smooth rounded cap. Capsules of *E. pulchella* are brown when mature, but those of *E. tenuiramis* are distinctly waxy-white or green with white speckling due to wax retention in pits on the fruit surface.

Notes

Eucalyptus is a genus of nearly 800 species, most of which are endemic to Australia, with a few species extending to parts of Malesia and as far north as the Philippines.

External Links

- EUCLID
- Flora of Australia
- Flora of New Zealand Online
- GBIF
- iNaturalist NZ
- NZPCN

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