

NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

Kunzea sinclairii (Kirk) W.Harris

Common Names

Great Barrier Island kākūka

Origin

New Zealand endemic.

Cultivation

Apart from specimens in major botanical gardens, not widely cultivated and only rarely sold in gardens centres or nurseries.

Distribution

Endemic to rhyolite outcrops in the central portion of Great Barrier Island.

Distinguishing Features

- Widely spreading, prostrate branches.
- Branchlets with persistent hairs.
- Leaf surfaces silvery hairy.
- Leaves relatively broad.
- Long flower stalks (up to 7 mm).
- Fruit covered in silky hairs.

Habit

Mostly silver-grey to reddish-grey or grey-green shrubs, rarely attaining 6 m tall. Branches prostrate and spreading.

Bark and Stem/Trunk

Bark corky to papery, stringy or coarsely fragmented into small squares. Branchlets with persistent hairs.

Leaves

Leaves alternate, oblanceolate to obovate or lanceolate to elliptic, (6–)10–18(–20) mm long, (2–)3–4(–4.5) mm wide, (juvenile leaves may be longer), young leaf surfaces hairless but adult leaf surfaces softly and densely hairy, leaves as a result appearing silver-grey, usually paler beneath, hairs of midribs and margins converging at leaf apex, surfaces not puckered; margins entire; tips acute; leaf stalks absent or short.

Flowers

Flowers borne in compact clusters to 20 mm long, these occasionally elongating on late season growth, axis densely hairy, flowers \pm 6–10 mm in diam., stalks present, long (up to 7 mm), petals 5, mostly white, oil glands not evident to the naked eye in fresh or dried material; sepals 5, tips free; stamens 18–46, white, longer than petals. Main flowering period: late spring to summer, but some flowers may be present in early spring or autumn.

Fruit

Fruit dry, (3–)4(–5)-locular, \pm 3–4 mm wide, uniformly hairy, flat-topped when valves closed.

Similar Species

Readily distinguished from all other species of *Kunzea* by its usually prostrate to decumbent habit, and by the relatively broad silvery grey, silky leaves. Very occasionally this species can form a small tree but the distinctive silvery grey foliage is unique to this species and serves to distinguish even these unusual examples.

Notes

Because of its small area of occupancy and vulnerability to myrtle rust (caused by *Austropuccinia psidii*), *K. sinclairii* has a 2018 conservation status of Threatened – Nationally Critical.

The genus *Kunzea* also occurs in Australia, where it is represented by more than 50 species of which three (*K. ambigua*, *K. baxteri*, *K. parvifolia*) are cultivated occasionally in gardens in New Zealand; another nine species are recorded as having been included in research trials or as rare garden occurrences.

External Links

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

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