

NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

Leptospermum morrisonii Joy Thomps.

Common Names

Morrison's tea tree

Origin

Australia: in central coastal and tableland areas of New South Wales.

Cultivation

The most commonly cultivated Australian *Leptospermum* in New Zealand; those with red-coloured foliage have been named *L. morrisonii* 'Copper Sheen', although nurseries have propagated it by both cuttings and seed. Forms with green or burgundy foliage are also available. Naturalisations have been recorded from nearby trees.

Distribution

Widely known from urban parks and gardens throughout New Zealand.

Distinguishing Features

- Leaves aromatic.
- Leaves often red-purple.
- Leaves to 35 mm or more long, 8 mm wide, slightly sickle-shaped.
- Sepals thin.
- Stamens in bundles.
- Fruit 5-locular, valves forming a broad high dome before opening.

Habit

Shrub or small tree to about 5 m tall.

Bark and Stem/Trunk

Older stems with a firm and corrugated bark. Young branchlets and stems hairy, becoming hairless with age.

Leaves

Adult leaves alternate, narrowly elliptic to oblanceolate, slightly sickle-shaped, 15–35(–62) mm long, 2–8 mm wide, flat or sometimes recurved, silky hairy at first, becoming hairless, same colour or different colours on upper and lower surfaces, new growth exposed to sunlight is often purple, leaf surfaces not puckered; margins entire; tips acute; leaf stalks absent or very short.

Flowers

Flowers solitary, axillary, ± 12–15 mm in diam., stalked, petals 5, 5–7 mm long, white to greenish-cream; sepals 5, 2.5–3.5 mm long, tips free, thin, hairless, stamens white, 3.5–4.5 mm long, in bundles. Main flowering period: mid-summer.

Fruit

Fruit dry, 5-locular, ± 6–10 mm wide, valves forming a broad high dome before opening, becoming woody with age.

Similar Species

In New Zealand, the green-leaved form of *L. morrisonii* is similar to *L. petersonii*, but the former possesses acute leaf tips and stamens 3.5 mm or longer while the latter possesses notched leaf tips and stamens 3.5 mm or shorter.

Notes

Leptospermum morrisonii 'Copper Sheen' with its coppery-purple coloured leaves is a popular garden plant in New Zealand. Material in New Zealand was originally misidentified and sold under the name *L. nitidum* 'Copper Sheen'. It has also erroneously been referred to as *L. morrisonii* 'Burgundy', an Australian cultivar with a different origin.

Leptospermum is a genus of about 87 species, mostly Australian, but extending to Malesia and New Zealand.

External Links

- Flora of New Zealand Online
- GBIF
- iNaturalist NZ
- PlantNET: New South Wales Flora Online
- Plants of South Eastern New South Wales

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