

NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

Leptospermum polygalifolium Salisb. subsp. *polygalifolium*

Common Names

jellybush, jelly bush, tantoon

Origin

Australia: widespread on the tablelands and coast of central eastern New South Wales, extending southward along the coast.

Cultivation

In New Zealand mainly present as a cultivated plant in urban areas; occasional naturalisations observed near planted specimens.

Distribution

Scattered records and observations from mainly urban plantings across New Zealand.

Distinguishing Features

- Adult leaves oblanceolate, to 20 mm long, 2–3 mm wide.
- Leaves slighter paler below than above.
- Stems with a flange around each leaf base extending down the stem.
- Flowers \pm 12 mm diam., greenish to creamy white.
- Sepals deciduous.
- Sepals hairless.
- Stamens in bundles.
- Fruit valves domed, slightly woody.

Habit

Shrub 1–3 m tall, or tree to 5 m or more tall.

Bark and Stem/Trunk

Usually firm and soft, or thick to flaky in some tree forms; a flange around each leaf base extending down the stem. Young branchlets and stems hairy, becoming hairless with age.

Leaves

Adult leaves oblanceolate, 10–20 mm or more long, \pm 2–3 mm wide, lower surface often much paler, leaf blade flat, leaf surfaces not puckered, hairy at first, becoming hairless especially on upper surface, hairs on lower surface lingering; margins entire, tending to recurve, tips acute, sometimes recurved; leaf stalks absent or very short.

Flowers

Flowers solitary, axillary, \pm 12 mm diam., stalked, petals 5, greenish to creamy white; sepals 5, 2–2.5 mm long, deciduous, tips free, hairless; stamens white, in bundles. Main flowering period: late winter to summer.

Fruit

Fruit dry, 5-locular, \pm 6–10 mm wide, valves forming a broad high dome before opening, becoming woody with age, but fruit valves only slightly woody.

Similar Species

The subspecies *L. polygalifolium* subsp. *tropicum* (accepted by the Australian Plant Census, but not recognised as distinct in Queensland State, where the taxon naturally occurs) is also present in New Zealand, though rarely planted or observed. It differs from *L. polygalifolium* subsp. *polygalifolium* by having a weeping habit with narrower leaves (usually less than 1.5 mm wide).

Notes

Leptospermum flavescens is a name still commonly used by the nursery industry, although Thompson (1989) transferred it into synonymy under the *L. polygalifolium* complex, within which she recognised six Australian subspecies. For New Zealand, it appears that only *L. polygalifolium* subsp. *tropicum* (under the cultivar names *Leptospermum* 'Cardwell' and 'Pacific Beauty') and *L. polygalifolium* subsp. *polygalifolium* are cultivated. *Leptospermum polygalifolium* is a complex group with widespread intergradation between the various forms. It is possible that further revision of the species will occur in the future.

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

External Links

- CitSciHub
- Flora of New Zealand Online

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

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