

NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

Lophomyrtus ×*ralphii* (Hook.f.) Burret

Common Names

small-leaved ramarama

Origin

New Zealand. A naturally occurring hybrid and a suite of artificially created hybrids between *L. bullata* and *L. obcordata*.

Cultivation

Lophomyrtus ×*ralphii* is popular in cultivation and widely available. Many nursery-bred, selected and named cultivars with a range of growth habits and leaf colours have been developed and are commercially available. Often incorporated in amenity landscaping.

Distribution

Where ramarama (*L. bullata*) meets with rōhutu (*L. obcordata*) the hybrid *L. ×ralphii* is often common. Sometimes *L. ×ralphii* is locally dominant occurring in places where ramarama is scarce or has seemingly died out. It is fully fertile and often forms introgressive hybrid swarms. Occurs naturally in the North Island and north-eastern South Island of New Zealand – the range of *L. bullata*. Garden cultivars, derived from hybridism, are grown throughout the North and South Islands.

Distinguishing Features

- Dwarf shrubs to erect branching shrubs or small trees.
- Leaves opposite, leathery, gland-dotted and usually slightly puckered ('bubbly', bullate) between veins.
- Leaves sub-orbicular, green, reddish, purple, bronze, yellow-green or variegated; typically to 19 mm long and to 17 mm wide, tip may be notched (as in *L. obcordata*).
- Flowers solitary, axillary, petals and stamens white.
- Petals and sepals 4.
- Flower and fruit stalks long.
- Fruit a bright red to black, rounded berry, ± 6 mm wide.

Habit

Ranges from dwarf shrubs (for some cultivars) to erect branching shrubs to ± 2 metres tall or small trees.

Bark and Stem/Trunk

Likely to range between characteristics of parents, slightly fibrous and flaky to smooth with peeling flakes. Young branchlets and stems hairy, becoming hairless with age. Young branchlets 4-angled to begin with then round with age.

Leaves

Leaves opposite, leathery, gland-dotted, usually sub-orbicular, usually intermediate in size and shape between those of the parent species, to (6–)17–19(–40) mm long, to (7–)8–17(–26) mm wide; leaf size and colour is variable in the cultivars, some of which have reddish, purple, bronze, yellow-green or variegated leaves, lower surface paler than the upper surface or reddish purple, mostly slightly puckered ('bubbly'), and between the characteristics of the parents; tips often slightly notched; leaf stalks variable in length.

Flowers

Flowers solitary, axillary, variable in size but less than 12 mm wide, flower stalks present but varying in length, petals 4, white; sepals 4, persistent, tips free, hairy; stamens numerous, white. Main flowering period: late spring to summer.

Fruit

Fruit a bright red to dark reddish purple to black, rounded berry, 2–3-locular, ± 6 mm wide, seeds solitary to numerous, kidney-shaped.

Similar Species

Most similar to the parents of the hybrid, *L. bullata* and *L. obcordata*. Distinguished from them by intermediate leaf size, shape and degree of puckering, as well as leaf colour in cultivated situations. Dwarf habit is most likely to be associated with the hybrid rather than the species.

Notes

Lophomyrtus is a genus of two species (*L. bullata* and *L. obcordata*) endemic to New Zealand. Many cultivars, involving hybridism of these two species, have been released by nurseries such as the former New Plymouth nursery Duncan and Davies. Among the most popular are: *Lophomyrtus* 'Black Beauty', with a narrow upright growth habit to 2 m tall, and very dark red-brown foliage; 'Gloriosa', an upright cultivar to 2 m tall, with cream-edged green leaves that develop pink tones especially in winter; 'Indian Chief', with reddish-brown foliage that darkens in winter; 'Kathryn', up to 3 m tall, with relatively large bullate leaves that are purplish-brown; 'Little Star', a compact selection with small, rounded, cream-edged green leaves that are suffused with pink; 'Pixie', another dwarf and compact selection with small, bright, red-brown leaves; and 'Red Dragon', up to 1.8 m tall, with narrow red leaves tapering to a point that mature to a dark chocolate shade.

Myrtle rust (caused by *Austropuccinia psidii*) has been recorded in both parent species (*L. bullata* and *L. obcordata*) and in cultivars derived from the hybrids.

External Links

- [CitSciHub \(natural hybrid\)](#)
- [CitSciHub \(hybrids and cultivars\)](#)
- [GBIF](#)
- [iNaturalist NZ](#)

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