

NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

Melaleuca armillaris (Sol. ex Gaertn.) Sm.

Common Names

bracelet honey-myrtle, cream paperbark, giant honey-myrtle

Origin

South-eastern Australia: eastern New South Wales, eastern Victoria and Tasmania.

Cultivation

In New Zealand planted in parks and gardens, or for shelter; occasionally naturalised from nearby planted specimens from Auckland north, and naturalising into gumland scrub in the Far North.

Distribution

Occasional in the North Island of New Zealand, particularly north of Auckland.

Distinguishing Features

- Shrub to \pm 6 m tall with papery or hard, fissured or occasionally corky bark.
- Leaves narrow-linear with a hooked tip, alternate on branchlet, gland-dotted below, aromatic.
- Flowers in a dense cylindrical spike, stamens white or occasionally pinkish mauve.
- Capsules collectively in a dense cylindrical spike, each capsule 4–5 mm wide.
- Flowers spring to summer.

Habit

Shrub or small tree to \pm 6 m tall, branches may be slightly weeping.

Bark and Stem/Trunk

Main stems with bark that is described as papery or rough, hard or corky, often with shallow fissures, in older trees. Young stems initially slightly hairy, becoming hairless.

Leaves

Leaves alternate, narrow-linear, \pm 12–25 mm long, \pm 1 mm wide, dark green, concave above, gland-dotted below, aromatic when rubbed, hairless; margins entire, tips with a sharp hook; leaf stalks 1–2 mm long.

Flowers

Flowers in a dense cylindrical spike, 30–70 mm long, 20–28 mm wide, arising as a side-branch from which shoots continue to grow, spike axis hairless to hairy. Petals 5, 2–3 mm long. Stamens much longer, in bundles of 8–18, stamen filament (stalk) white to cream or rarely pinkish-mauve, filaments in each bundle fused basally for 5–6 mm, free part of filaments \pm 3–7 mm long. Main flowering period: summer.

Fruit

Capsules woody, collectively in a dense spike, individual capsules short cylindrical, \pm 4–5 mm wide, sepals mostly persistent, pointed to wavy on the capsule rim.

Similar Species

Melaleuca armillaris usually has longer leaves (10–30 mm) than *M. ericifolia*, *M. decora*, *M. incana*, *M. squarrosa* and *M. bracteata*, the other larger-growing white-flowered *Melaleuca* species occasionally grown in New Zealand, apart from *M. linariifolia* and *M. alternifolia* that have distinctive flowers. Of that group, only *M. armillaris* and *M. decora* have papery bark, narrow leaves and flower spikes to more than 40 mm long (*M. decora* to \pm 50 mm long and 17 mm wide, and *M. armillaris* to 70 mm long and 20–28 mm wide). Both species have alternate leaves (although *M. armillaris* is also sometimes described as opposite-leaved), but the hooked tip of *M. armillaris* is distinctive. Stamens of *M. armillaris* are 7–12 mm long in bundles of 10–16, whereas *M. decora* has stamens \pm 7 mm long in bundles of 20–40. *M. armillaris* is known to be much more widespread than *M. decora* and is naturalised in the north.

Notes

Two subspecies are recorded in Australia: *Melaleuca armillaris* subsp. *akineta*, restricted to ridges and granite outcrops in a limited area of South Australia, and *M. armillaris* subsp. *armillaris*, which has a wider natural distribution, is cultivated as a fast-growing windbreak or screening plant, and sometimes naturalises in Australia and northern New Zealand. *Melaleuca armillaris* subsp. *akineta* has shorter stamens and fewer flowers per spike than *M. armillaris* subsp. *armillaris*. No specimens of *M. armillaris* subsp. *akineta* have been recorded in New Zealand, and it is most probable that all plants in New Zealand, presumably originally brought in for horticultural purposes, are *M. armillaris* subsp. *armillaris*.

Melaleuca is a genus of about 230 species, centred in Australia but extending to Asia, Malesia, and New Caledonia. We follow the Australian Plant Census (APC) by recognising *Melaleuca* and *Callistemon* as separate genera.

External Links

- Flora of New Zealand Online
- GBIF
- iNaturalist NZ
- NZPCN
- PlantNET: New South Wales Flora Online
- Plants of South Eastern New South Wales
- VicFlora: Flora of Victoria
- Weeds of Australia: Biosecurity Queensland

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