

## NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

# *Melaleuca styphelioides* Sm.

### Common Names

prickly paperbark, prickly-leaved paperbark, prickly-leaved tea-tree

### Origin

Australia: indigenous to coastal areas of Queensland and New South Wales and a few sites in Victoria, typically in swampy areas.

### Cultivation

In New Zealand occasionally planted in parks and gardens as an ornamental tree. No records of naturalisation in New Zealand.

### Distribution

Lowland North Island areas of New Zealand.

### Distinguishing Features

- Shrub to 10 m or more tall, bark papery.
- Leaves alternate along the stem, broadly ovate, bright green, often twisted and concave above, the tip tapered to a sharp point; leaf stalks absent, aromatic when rubbed.
- White flowers in spikes to 20 mm long, 25 mm wide.
- Stamens 12–26 per bundle, to 12 mm long, filaments in each bundle fused basally for  $\pm$  5 mm, free part of filaments 4–6 mm long.
- Capsules collectively in a dense cylindrical spike, capsules ovate, to 3.5 mm long and 4 mm wide, with a wavy rim produced by persistent remains of sepals.
- Flowers late spring to summer.

### Habit

Shrub or tree 3–10 m tall, occasionally 20 m tall, branches may be slightly weeping.

### Bark and Stem/Trunk

Bark papery or hard, fissured, white to black or grey. Branchlets hairy.

### Leaves

Leaves alternate along the stem, stalkless, broadly ovate, 4–25 mm long, 2–7 mm wide, bright green, often twisted or concave above, faintly 15–30-veined, aromatic when rubbed, oil glands sometimes distinct; margins hairy; tip tapered to a sharp point; leaf stalks absent.

### Flowers

Flowers in few- to many-flowered, dense spikes 10–20 mm long,  $\pm$  25 mm wide, axis hairy, growing on into a leafy shoot, flowers usually in threes within each leaf-like bract, white. Petals 5, more-or-less circular, 1–2 mm long. Stamens 12–26 per bundle,  $\pm$  7–12 mm long, filaments in each bundle fused basally for 3–5 mm, free part of filaments  $\pm$  4–6 mm long. Hypanthium hairy, to 2.6 mm long. Main flowering period: late spring to summer.

### Fruit

Capsules collectively in a dense cylindrical spike, capsules ovate, 2–3.5 mm long, 2–4 mm wide, with a wavy rim produced by persistent remains of sepals.

### Similar Species

The long, bright green, broad-based leaves (to 25 mm long), that are often slightly dished and drawn out to a sharp point together with short spikes of white flowers are distinctive among *Melaleuca* species. *M. squarrosa*, cultivated occasionally in parks and gardens in lowland areas of the North Island, also has papery bark and bright green, broad-based leaves with pointed tips, and white flowers, but its leaves are shorter, to only 15 mm long, and more distinctively, are in two opposite rows, whereas those of *M. styphelioides* are alternate along the stem. *M. squarrosa* stamens may be slightly longer than those of *M. styphelioides*, at 6–8 mm, but are in bundles of 6–12, whereas *M. styphelioides* stamens are  $\pm$  6 mm long, in bundles of 12–26.

### Notes

*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

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence (CC BY 4.0).

