

## NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

# *Metrosideros fulgens* Sol. ex Gaertn.

### Common Names

akatawhiwhi, akatea, climbing rātā, rātā

### Origin

New Zealand endemic.

### Cultivation

Not widely grown in cultivation, but available from specialist native plant nurseries. Provides some colour in early winter. Common cultivars are *Metrosideros fulgens* 'Jaffa', 'Orange Princess', 'Red Glow' and the yellow-flowered 'Gold' and 'Aurata'.

### Distribution

Three Kings, North Island and northern South Island extending into Westland.

### Distinguishing Features

- Stout climber.
- Short adventitious roots to adhere to the trunks of host trees.
- Adult leaves usually 40–60 mm long.
- Flowers terminal on branches.
- Flowers scarlet (orange-red), rarely yellow.
- Calyx tube as wide as fruit.
- Fruit capsule ribbed.

### Habit

Stout vines up to ± 12 m or more when supported, or less commonly as a bushy shrub.

### Bark and Stem/Trunk

Bark red-brown to grey, sometimes tinged with pink, flaky, separating into thick squarish flakes. Branchlets round to indistinctly 4-angled, with short brown hairs.

### Leaves

Leaves arranged in opposite pairs, each pair being at right angles to the pair below, (30–)40–60(–75) mm long, 10–25 mm wide, elliptic to oblong, upper surface bright to dark glossy green, paler below, leaf surface flat, not puckered, upper and lower surfaces hairless, oil glands visible on both surfaces; margins entire, tips pointed or rounded, stalks short (± 2–5 mm long), stout, hairy.

### Flowers

Flowers in rounded terminal clusters, cluster-branchlets often 3-flowered, or flowers solitary on cluster axis. Flowers ± 10–15 mm in diam., flower stalks not apparent to absent, petals 5, scarlet (orange-red), rarely yellow; sepals 5, tips free, persistent, without hairs, stamens scarlet (orange-red), filaments 20–25 mm long, much longer than petals, pollen yellow. Main flowering period: autumn to winter.

### Fruit

Fruit dry, ± 5–7 mm wide, capsule ribbed, capsule dome occurring below the persistent calyx tube, capsule splits along sides to release seeds.

### Similar Species

Distinguishable from *M. albiflora*, the other large-leaved climbing rātā, by possessing mainly scarlet-coloured flowers (from autumn to winter) and ribbed capsules as opposed to white flowers (from late winter to spring) and non-ribbed capsules.

### Notes

The short clinging roots usually die, causing the thick, twisted, rope-like stems in mature vines to hang free from the host like ropes. *Metrosideros fulgens* was given a conservation status of Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable in 2018. Since then myrtle rust (caused by *Austropuccinia psidii*) has been found infecting this species.

*Metrosideros* is a genus of more than 50 species of trees, shrubs and vines, mostly found in the Pacific region. New Zealand is well represented by having 12 endemic species.

### External Links

- [CitSciHub](#)
- [Flora of New Zealand Online](#)
- [GBIF](#)
- [iNaturalist NZ](#)

- NZPCN

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