

NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

Syzygium maire (A.Cunn.) Sykes & Garn.-Jones

Synonyms

Eugenia maire A.Cunn.

Common Names

maire tawake, maire tawhake, swamp maire, waiwaka, whāwhākou

Origin

New Zealand endemic.

Cultivation

Rarely cultivated.

Distribution

North Island and the north-eastern South Island of New Zealand from Te Pahi south to Rarangi (near Blenheim). Now often scarce or absent over large parts of its former range due to the clearance of swamp forest.

Distinguishing Features

- A dense, upright tree to ± 12 m tall, with pale, smooth, or sometimes flaky bark, and sometimes with pneumatophores.
- Branchlets hairless, spreading, 4-angled.
- Leaves opposite, oval, tapered to both ends, to 60 mm long and 25 mm wide, often wavy, yellowish-green, shining; stalked. Leaves sometimes with small reddish marks or spots. Often blistered by psyllids.
- Flower clusters of 5–30; individual flowers white, short-stalked, ± 12 mm diam.; petals orbicular, 2–3 mm diam., stamens to ± 12 mm long.
- Fruit berry-like, to 15 mm diam., globose to ovate, deep crimson, glossy, with a small circular rim (the remaining calyx) at the apex. Seed large, solitary.

Habit

A dense, upright tree to ± 12 m tall.

Bark and Stem/Trunk

Bark smooth, pale, whitish or grey, to flaking in soft or brittle, irregular fragments. Pneumatophores may develop in waterlogged soils; adventitious roots are sometimes formed on trunk. Branchlets spreading, hairless, 4-angled. Ribbons absent.

Leaves

Leaves opposite, oval, 25–60 mm long, 10–25 mm wide, yellowish-green, shining above, paler green below, surfaces usually blemished with red or maroon-black spots or irregular blotches, and often sporting blisters caused by psyllids; margins usually wavy; tip pointed, base tapered; leaf stalks slender, 5–10 mm long.

Flowers

Flowers in 5–30-flowered clusters to ± 100 mm diam. Individual flowers slender-stalked, ± 12 mm diam., petals orbicular, white, 2–3 mm diam., cohering, shed together; stamens numerous, 5–12 mm long or slightly longer, white; style shorter than longest stamens, distinctly broader than stamens and tapering, cream to yellow-green. Main flowering period: mid-summer to mid-winter.

Fruit

Fruit fleshy, berry-like, 10–15 mm wide, globose to ovate, deep crimson, glossy, with a small circular rim (the remaining calyx) at the apex. Seed large, solitary, 6–11 mm long.

Similar Species

Syzygium maire is unlikely to be confused with any other indigenous plant. It could possibly be confused with monkey apple (*S. smithii*) which sometimes grows with *S. maire* in urban forest remnants, and which differs from *S. maire* by lacking pneumatophores, having much larger ovate to broadly elliptic, dark green to yellow unblemished leaves with entire rather than wavy margin, and by the calyx lobes which are fused together rather than free and also by the stamens which are ± 3 mm long, instead of 5–12 mm long or more. In addition, the fruit of *S. maire* are deep crimson, glossy, with a small circular rim at the apex whereas those of *S. smithii* are whitish pink to pale purple with a small apical cavity.

Notes

This species has previously been known as *Eugenia maire*. *Syzygium maire* is not related to other species known in Te Reo as 'maire', those species are either in the genus *Nestegis* (Oleaceae) or *Mida* (Santalaceae).

Syzygium maire is attacked by *Austropuccinia psidii*, sometimes severely, which causes myrtle rust, but no myrtle-rust related deaths have been reported for this species to date. As a precautionary measure and also because *S. maire* is now uncommon over large parts of

its former range, this species has been listed as Threatened – Nationally Critical (de Lange et al. 2018).

In water-logged soils *S. maire* often produce pneumatophores. They are the only indigenous Myrtaceous plant known to do so commonly, though similar structures have been reported for mānuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) growing in wetlands in the southern South Island.

Syzygium is a genus of more than 1,200 species in Africa, Asia, Malesia, Australasia, New Caledonia and the Pacific Islands.

External Links

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