

Notes towards an Excursion Flora: *Pittosporum eugenioides* as a wild plant

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The sight of some fine example of a native plant in the wild makes it almost a duty to go then to the literature and at least the nearest herbaria to see if conjectures about the species' distribution and habitat preferences can reasonably be made.

My interest in *Pittosporum eugenioides* came about through a visit to the Platts-Mills Reserve at Maraetai, a nice piece of forest mostly of taraire and tall kanuka but raised beyond this in its one individual of *P. eugenioides*, the largest I had ever seen, a canopy tree of c. 16 m tall and 48 cm dbh. The substrate here is greywacke, and the slopes are rather dry, as shown by the codominance of *Coprosma arborea* with taraire on the higher ground. In this the Reserve reminded me of Waiheke Island forests, but I can't recall seeing notably large *P. eugenioides* there (Kirk makes no such mention in his account of that island, neither does Buchanan for Kawau). Curiously, the Reserve also has a single very large individual of kohuhu (*P. tenuifolium*); it is c. 13 m tall and 28 cm dbh.

Where then is the stronghold of *P. eugenioides*, that is, the region it grows to its largest size and in greatest abundance? Unfortunately, neither the literature nor the herbaria (AK, AKU only) are much help. The plant ranges from the Far North to Dunedin at least; it perhaps does favour the eastern side of the North Island, in particular from about the Hauraki Gulf down to Opotiki. A Maraetai-Hunua Ranges 'stronghold' may be as good a guess as any.

So there seems to be much to do before a concise modern account (such as might appear in an Excursion Flora) of the ecology of even a common species like as this one can be given. Similarly, the query-marks in the description below are my own 'work'.

Pittosporum eugenioides A.Cunn.

Eugenioides: like some species of *Eugenia* in appearance. Tree to c. 12(-16) m tall and 40(-60) cm dbh, bark whitish, quite smooth, shed in small horizontal scrolls and flakes, slash and wood cream-coloured and scented of lemon (like the crushed leaves), mostly glabrous (but uniseriate cilia on the bud scales, and T-hairs on infl. axes and ovary, glandular hairs also present); root system?; branchlets orthotropic, tending to be whorled from the base of a growth flush and sylleptic with leader, the new stems soon wine-colored, c. 3 mm diam.; leaves spiralled (the last few in a flush \pm whorled), persisting for us. 2-3 growth seasons, the blades firmly chartaceous, glossy, to c. 12 x 5 cm, \pm elliptic, entire (but seedling leaves sometimes notched near base), broadly undulate towards margins, midrib prominent above, cream-coloured, lateral veins rather numerous; petiole c. 1 cm long, cream-coloured.

Inflorescence a terminal cluster of us. 2-6 (?) umbels each on a peduncle c. 1.5-? cm long, the flowers us. 2-5 (?) together on rays (pedicels) c. 1 cm long; flowers varying in size and in degree of development of stamens and ovary (i.e. male and female?), fragrant (of honey?); sepals not imbricate; petals yellowish, ligulate, c. 6 mm long.

Fruit broadly ellipsoid, c. 8 mm diam. when dry, 2(-3)-valved, the valves externally dark and finely granular; seeds in a viscid pulp, persisting \pm enclosed in the papery endocarp after the valves have fallen.

Vernacular names: tarata (Maori), lemonwood (NZ English).