

Notes & articles

Ixerba brexioides

The Tawari – *Ixerba brexioides* – was mentioned in Graeme Jane’s interesting account of the Bay of Plenty. Cheeseman’s Flora comments appreciatively “A very beautiful tree. Its handsome mode of growth, which has been compared with the northern *Arbutus*, its elegant foliage and its conspicuous large white flowers, often produced in great abundance, render it most attractive.” The old Laing and Blackwell has a good picture of it.

Ixerba is one of our North Island plants that does not cross the Volcanic Plateau, but like the kauri it should grow easily in Dunedin so I asked the local native plant specialists, Ribbonwood Nurseries for it. Philip Dunn produced a tray of sad little seedlings, raised in unsterilised compost, and said “That’s the best that we can do. We can’t sell those, can we?” So I got one as a gift.

I thought at first that it might cheer up in my best garden soil but it did not. So I gave it company – a seedling of broadleaf (*Griselinia littoralis*) and it was soon away. If the scientist can overcome the gardener in me I shall see if it can go it alone. I suspect not.

It seems that the *Ixerba* only grows when it is linked with the network of AM (arbuscular mycorrhizal) fungi pervading the soil. I doubt if it is unique in this but I know of no published examples. Metcalf’s “Cultivation of New Zealand Plants” makes no mention of *Ixerba*! But it is obviously something that anyone keen on natives would want to grow.

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[Watch this space for further results from Geoff’s ongoing experiments with *Ixerba* seedlings -ed].

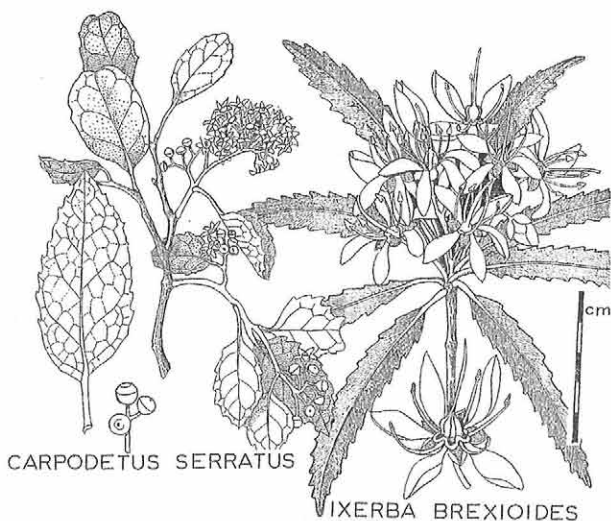


Fig. *Carpodetus serratus* (marble leaf) and *Ixerba brexioides*, (tawari) two monotypic, endemic species of the Escallonia family. From: Poole & Adams, *Trees and Shrubs of N.Z.*