

More *Pittosporum kirkii* Hook.f. growing in Rodney

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In 2010 I wrote an article about how, together with David Wilson from the Department of Conservation, I followed up an old Thomas Kirk record of the 1860s, and we hunted for *Pittosporum kirkii* growing on Mt Tamahunga, epiphytic on old rata (*Metrosideros robusta*) trees (Young 2010). The one plant that we spied then has, until now, been the only example of this species that I have been able to find in the Rodney / Kaipara area.

Brenda Osborne from Matakana, while working for the Forest Bridge Trust, was recently contacted by young Alex Wardenaar, who is employed as a mustelid trapper by the same Trust, asking if she could identify the plant shown in a photo he sent her. Brenda thought that it might be *P. kirkii*, and asked me to verify her ID. I was more than pleased to do so, and a trip was arranged to visit a privately owned, QE II covenanted bush, in the hills north west of Matakana. This site, at an altitude of 280 m, is 5.5 km from the Tamahunga site as the kereru flies. By consulting the Australasian Virtual Herbarium distribution map I found that there were only two other, very old, records of *P. kirkii* growing in this general area. These were both lodged in the Allan Herbarium, at Landcare Research in Lincoln, which only gives generalised locations to within 10 km for sensitive species. One, CHR 79989, was collected by John Rawson (a forester) in 1968 near the Kaipara Harbour, I suspect on Atuanui/Mt Auckland, and the other, CHR 48041, by Lucy Moore in 1944, which could possibly also have been from Mt Tamahunga.

Near the end of Govan Wilson Road in the Matakana Valley a gravel road leads into the hills towards Conical Peak. Leaving this road, down a ridge following an old bulldozed track left from the logging days, Alex showed us a fallen rata tree with a single plant of *P. kirkii* growing epiphytically (Fig. 1). When the tree was standing, the epiphyte would have grown upwards and have been about 2m high, but on the fallen trunk it was horizontal, with the branches now trending upwards. It was multi-trunked, with a couple of very fresh young shoots growing from the base. Three of the branches were bearing 2 or 3 large green capsules (Fig. 2), and another couple of branches held the blackened, empty capsules from the previous year. Alex had seen another plant in the same general area, but as he couldn't pin-point it without a search, we left that for another day.

Pittosporum kirkii flowers in July and has very pretty yellow flowers: I wonder if I can arrange a winter visit?

Acknowledgements

My thanks to the landowner, Lynley Hunter, for giving permission to access her land; to Alex Wardenaar for being sharp-eyed and curious, for leading us on the day and for taking the photographs and to Brenda Osborne for contacting me and for her company.



Fig. 1. *Pittosporum kirkii* on a fallen rata tree. Photos: Alex Wardenaar.



Fig. 2. Three almost mature capsules at the tip of one branch.

References

Young, M.E. 2010: *Pittosporum kirkii* on Mt Tamahunga. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 65(2): 133-134.
<https://avh.ala.org.au> – accessed Apr 2023.