



Southern Rata Fact Sheet

Southern rata - (*Metrosideros umbellata*)

Best suited to cooler, high rainfall regions this rata grows particularly along the South Island's West Coast but is the most widely spread of all New Zealand rata ranging from small trees on high Northland and Coromandel outcrops to the subantarctic Auckland Islands where it forms the country's southernmost forests.

Occurs from sea level to 760m

Roots

Rata, like its relative, pohutukawa, has the ability to sprout root systems as and where needed. These adventitious roots form out of trunks and branches; and are able to grow in air over surfaces as they search for crevices, pockets of soil and moisture.

Wood

Dense and strong, as needed to withstand wind damage and drought; hard, very heavy, dark red heartwood; slow growing.

Bark

Rough and flaky forming a medium-thick, dry covering capable of protecting the tree from drought; and excellent surface for its own aerial roots and the roots of epiphytes (an epiphyte stores water for itself and its host).

Leaves and shoots

3-6 cm long. Leaf is sharply pointed

Flower colour

Scarlet. Occasional white or yellow

Flowers between December and February depending on location and weather patterns

Stamens

Approximately 2cm



Fruit/seed capsules

Largest capsule of the three, being around 0.75 - 1 cm per individual capsule. Up to 6 in a bunch. Bright green when young

Fruits require a year to mature

Mature Trees

Grows to around 15 m high or more, with a trunk diameter up to 1m, sometimes much larger, sometimes sprawling rather than upright

Growth Rate

slow

How Old

Reach 500 years old on glacial moraine

Ecosystem

Plants

Mainly beech forest, podocarps and kamahi

Insects

A major source of honey on the West Coast, several scale insect species on leaves

Birds

Nectar for kaka, tui and bellbird

Animals

Roosts for bats on southern islands