

Pittosporum pimelioidesKatie Reynolds

Not infrequently, from the Bay of Islands north, I meet this delightful little plant; and wherever I meet it I greet it with pleasure. I should in fact say that *P. pimelioides* is not rare so much as unnoticed, and that a very modest estimate would give it, in the wild, well in excess of 1000 plants. This observation comes only from the populations familiar to me. I am quite sure that a little investigation in other likely areas would reveal more.

As a seedling and young plant it is look-alike to several other species, e.g., mairehau, *Phebalium nudum*, mingimingi, *Cyathodes juniperina*, kanuka, *Leptospermum ericoides* and a small, narrow-leaved *Alseuosmia linariifolia*. Where these plants are present also *P. pimelioides* can maintain a very efficient incognito! A friend who is a good and observant botanist took a trip to Taipa, combining a fishing day with a search for *P. pimelioides*. On his way to the fishing rocks he walked right through a fine population of it. Only on his return through it did he observe it! Without looking for it I found it in AkeAke Scenic Reserve, Bay of Islands. I had walked along this historic pa site for pleasure and to enjoy the magnificent panorama. Along the track I stooped to look more closely at some young mairehau, realised their identity and then observed that the woods along this ridge are full of *Pittosporum pimelioides*. I have found it in many places round the shorelines in the Bay, in habitat very different from that of the kauri, kanuka, tanekaha ridges. Sometimes it appears in the crowded vegetation just above the rocky beaches, sometimes only a metre or so in from the mangroves and the salt meadow with its *Salicornia*, *Selliera*, *Samolus* and *Lobelia*. Often in these more shady, damper sites and by stream-sides it is in its *alseuosmia* form. I met it first in 1938 on a kauri ridge "Kopu-o-kai" in the Kaitaia-Fairburn district. We did in fact mistake it for *alseuosmia*. A cutting grown plant later showed it to be *P. pimelioides*.

I know of it at Taipa, Mangonui, Whangaroa, AkeAke Reserve, Opuia State Forest (abundant) and the shorelines from AkeAke to Old Woman Is., and from AkeAke to Te Tii, Bay of Islands.

From cutting it is the easiest of all the pittosporums. It roots in a few weeks in water in a sunny window, and then transfers readily to soil, not always the case with cuttings so rooted. This is consistent with its habit in the wild where delicate slender stems bend and take root. It is easy from seed too, though in true pittosporum style germination can take a year or more.

When seedlings are only a few cm tall male and female plants are very different in appearance, very easy to distinguish one from the other. The male plants resemble *Cyathodes juniperina*, the female *Phebalium nudum* or *Alseuosmia*. In the better soils of garden cultivation this likeness is in form only. They are dark green, unlike the pale colour of plants growing on the hungry soils of the ridges where a second glance is certainly necessary to identify *P. pimelioides*.

I found the AkeAke population one January and revisited it the following July when the whole area was filled with the fragrance of its flowering. I grow some plants in containers in order to be able to bring them indoors at flowering time and to savour this perfume.