

Plate 461 *Scandia rosifolia*

Ligusticum aromaticum

Synonyms: *Angelica rosaefolia*, *Anisotome rosaefolia*

Māori name: Koheriki.

Teoneroa, New Zealand (Poverty Bay), 8th – 11th Oct., 1769.



Scandia rosifolia is a herb, and rare semi-erect sprawling woody aromatic shrub growing to a height of 1m. It has shiny green foliage similar to that of a rose bush and develops small white flowers between September and June.

It is endemic in the North Island of New Zealand ranging from the Three Kings Islands in the north, to Taranaki in the west and the southern Ruahine Ranges in the east. It grows mainly in coastal situations on cliffs and banks.

In 2018, *Scandia rosifolia* was classified, from a conservation perspective, as 'Threatened'. Where it was once widespread on the North Island coastline, over the last 15 years or so, a rapid decline in populations has been observed. What remains is located in remote areas especially inaccessible to browsing animals, including the possum which form the major threat to the plant in the wild. A secondary threat arises from the plant being gynodioecious, i.e. the species has both female-only and hermaphroditic plants that co-exist within a given population. This means that the female-only sub-population, reproductively, is dependent on the hermaphroditic sub-population but not the other way round. If the hermaphroditic population ceases to exist, for any reason, the female-only population must survive by means other than seed fertilisation. In effect, they become reproductively extinct. Gynodioecy is an evolutionary intermediate stage between hermaphroditism (male and female in a single individual) and dioecy (each gender located in separate individuals), as a system of reproduction.

Scandia rosifolia exists in a cultivated form and can easily be grown from seed or semi-hardwood cuttings. It thrives best in free-draining, fertile soils, and, reportedly, makes an excellent pot or container plant. The Dutch garden designer and leading figure in the 'New Perennial' Movement, Piet Oudolf, is a keen user of herbaceous perennials and grasses of which *Scandia rosifolia* is a family member. The potential for *Scandia rosifolia* as a garden plant in comparison to its counterpart in the wild, is that there has been a marked improvement regarding flowering in addition to providing a wonderful green background to floral displays.

While the wild plant may have provided excellent browsing for animals, its main use to Māori peoples was for medicinal purposes. The leaves were used as a diuretic, for treating dropsy, and a remedy for syphilitic disease.

The plant was first collected by Banks and Solander in 1769 during Cook's first voyage on their first day at the North Island, New Zealand on 8th – 11th October and subsequently at several other sites. Banks wrote in his journal on the 11th October 1769,

'This morn we took leave of Poverty Bay with not above 40 species of Plants in our boxes, which is not to be wondered at as we were so little ashore and always upon the same spot, the only time we wanderd about a mile from the boats was upon a swamp where not more than 3 species of Plants were found.'

Banks also mentioned the role played by Tupaia who acted as an intermediary between ship and inhabitants. Tupaia was the Tahitian chief and/or priest who joined the Endeavour as a translator and navigator. The reason for the limited specimen gathering could have been the unfortunate encounters that Endeavour and company had with the indigenous Māori peoples, in which deaths and injuries were incurred arising mainly from cultural misunderstandings on both sides.

In relation to the production of the Florilegium, it is interesting to compare the artwork for *Scandia rosifolia* produced by John Frederick Miller in 1774, based on the sketches and notes of Sydney Parkinson. The engraving was produced by Gabriel Smith from Miller's artwork. While the two images are very similar and clearly illustrating the same plant, they are not identical. One possible explanation is that the images are of two different specimens as several specimens would have been collected. However, we know that John Miller based his artwork on the Sydney Parkinson's sketches and notes and no other versions were produced c1774. Therefore, the differences must have been introduced by the engraver, Gabriel Smith. This might indicate a degree of engraver's licence but also the possibility that the differences reflect adjustments to accommodate technicalities of the etching process as well as anticipating those relating to printing.

Robert Parkinson

Sources

Scandia Rosifolia, <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/scandia-rosifolia/>

Piet Oudolf, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet_Oudolf

Natural History Museum – *Scandia rosifolia*, *Scandia rosaefolia*,
<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/endeavour/single?id=2874>

<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/endeavour/single?id=2875>

Peter J. de Lange et al., *Conservation Status of New Zealand indigenous vascular plants*, Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai, New Zealand Threat Classification, 2017, Series 22. <https://www.newzealand.govt.nz>

Scandia Rosifolia (Native Angelica). <https://www.terrain.net.nz/friends-of-henui-group/trees-nature-botanical-names-r-to-z/scandia-rosifolia-nature-angelica.html>

Māori Plant Use:

https://maoriplantuse.landcareresearch.co.nz/WebForms/PeoplePlantsDetails.aspx?firstcoke=firstcome&Key=ADD791D_0D84-4DE-969E-4

Family: *Apiaceae*, <https://www.o2landscapes.com/pages/pp-scandia.php>

Plant Schedule for 1769 Garden, Longbush Ecobush Sanctuary, Gisborne, O2 Landscapes, 22nd April, 2015.

<https://www.longbushreserve.org/documents/1769PlantSchedule.pdf>

Joseph Banks' Journal, Cook's First Voyage.

<https://www.gutenberg.net.au/ebooks05/0501141.h.html>

Sydney Parkinson's Journal,

https://southseas.nlagov.au/journals/Parkinson/Parkinson_index.html