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## SEARCH FLORA

## CATEGORY

[All]

## LATIN NAME

## COMMON NAME

## FAMILY NAME

## SIGHTED IN

[Any]

## SIGHTED AS

[All]

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

[All]

## STATUS

[All]

## FLOWER COLOUR

 ALL
  NATIVE
  EXOTIC
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## Urtica ferox



### SPECIES

Urtica ferox

### ETYMOLOGY

**Urtica:** from the Latin verb urere which means "to burn"

**ferox:** From the Latin ferox 'fierce', usually referring to very spiny plants

### COMMON NAME(S)

Ongaonga, tree nettle

### CURRENT

#### CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 - Not Threatened

### PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUS

2009 - Not Threatened

2004 - Not Threatened

### AUTHORITY

Urtica ferox G.Forst.

### FAMILY

Urticaceae

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Jagged stinging large shrub to 3m tall, sometimes forming extensive thickets, bearing pairs of thin sharply toothed pointed leaves on a long stem. Young parts covered in white needles that inject a painful toxin. Flowers and fruit tiny, in short spikes at base of leaves.

### FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular - [Native](#)

### PLANT CODE

URTFER

### STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Trees &amp; Shrubs

### DISTRIBUTION

Endemic

. Found throughout NZ in North and South Islands reaching Otago as its southern limit.

### HABITAT

Common in the fringes of bushland. Mainly found in coastal and lowland forest margins and shrublands.

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**FEATURES**

The tree stands up to 2 meters tall with a base up to 12cm diameter. Its leaves are pale green 8-12 x 3-5 cm that are borne on petioles up to 5 cm long.

**SIMILAR TAXA**

None although other indigenous Urtica species may be confused with U. ferox when it is a juvenile

**FLOWERING**

November - March

**FRUITING**

December - May

**THREATS**

Not Threatened

**CHROMOSOME NO.**

2n = 48

**ENDEMIC TAXON**

Yes

**ENDEMIC GENUS**

No

**ENDEMIC FAMILY**

No

**WHERE TO BUY**

Can be purchased from [Oratia Native](#)

Plant Nurseries ([info@oratianatives.co.nz](mailto:info@oratianatives.co.nz))

**POISONOUS PLANT**

The tree nettle is one of New Zealand's most poisonous [native](#)

plants. Standing about two metres tall, it's coarsely toothed leaves have numerous white stinging hairs (trichomes), up to 6mm long, at the tip of each tooth as well as on young stalks and leaf veins. These are hollow cylinders with tapered points, which break after piercing the skin, injecting toxins into the tissues, giving rise to pain and a rash. There have been cases of dogs and horses developing neurological problems, with respiratory distress and convulsions within minutes of exposure, often dying within hours, although some do recover. There are also reports of human poisoning in botanical references or the press. Connor, in his book, The Poisonous Plants in New Zealand, mentions a group of trampers who developed loss of coordination for three days after being stung. In another instance, a typist developed tingling numbness in the hand after grasping a nettle bush, preventing her from typing for five days. There are also reports of severe headaches, blurred vision and extreme fatigue. A fatal poisoning was described in 1961, when a young man died of paralysis and respiratory problems several hours after walking through a patch of tree nettles. Click on this link for more information about [Poisonous native plants](#).



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