

7.0 A WHOLE COMMUNITY IN ONE TREE - EPIPHYTES AND CLIMBERS

7.1 EPIPHYTES

Perching plants. Epiphytes simply perch on the branches and trunks of host trees where there is more light for them to grow, without harming the host tree.

Although these plants grow on other trees they receive no food from them and cannot be called parasites. Perching plants normally grow where humus (soil and leaf litter) has collected, either in a fork or crevice of the tree, or embedded in moss on the tree.

7.2 CLIMBERS (LIANES)

The other group of plants, which live on other trees, are climbing plants or lianes. Like perching plants, they need more light than they can get on the forest floor so they grow up and over other trees to reach the light.

The climbers and epiphytes here are growing on a large rimu. The huge numbers of plants that can grow on a tree provide a wonderful home for birds and insect life in the forest.

Rātā vine is a climber - it is related to the northern rātā that grows into a large emergent tree.

7.3 TASK

How many epiphytes can you see (don't get your epiphytes and climbers confused)?

Draw the epiphytes and climbers climbing up the tree.

Look at a tree with nothing growing on it and see how few places there are for birds and insects to live on that tree.