

8.0 PODOCARP FOREST - THE DINOSAUR FOREST?

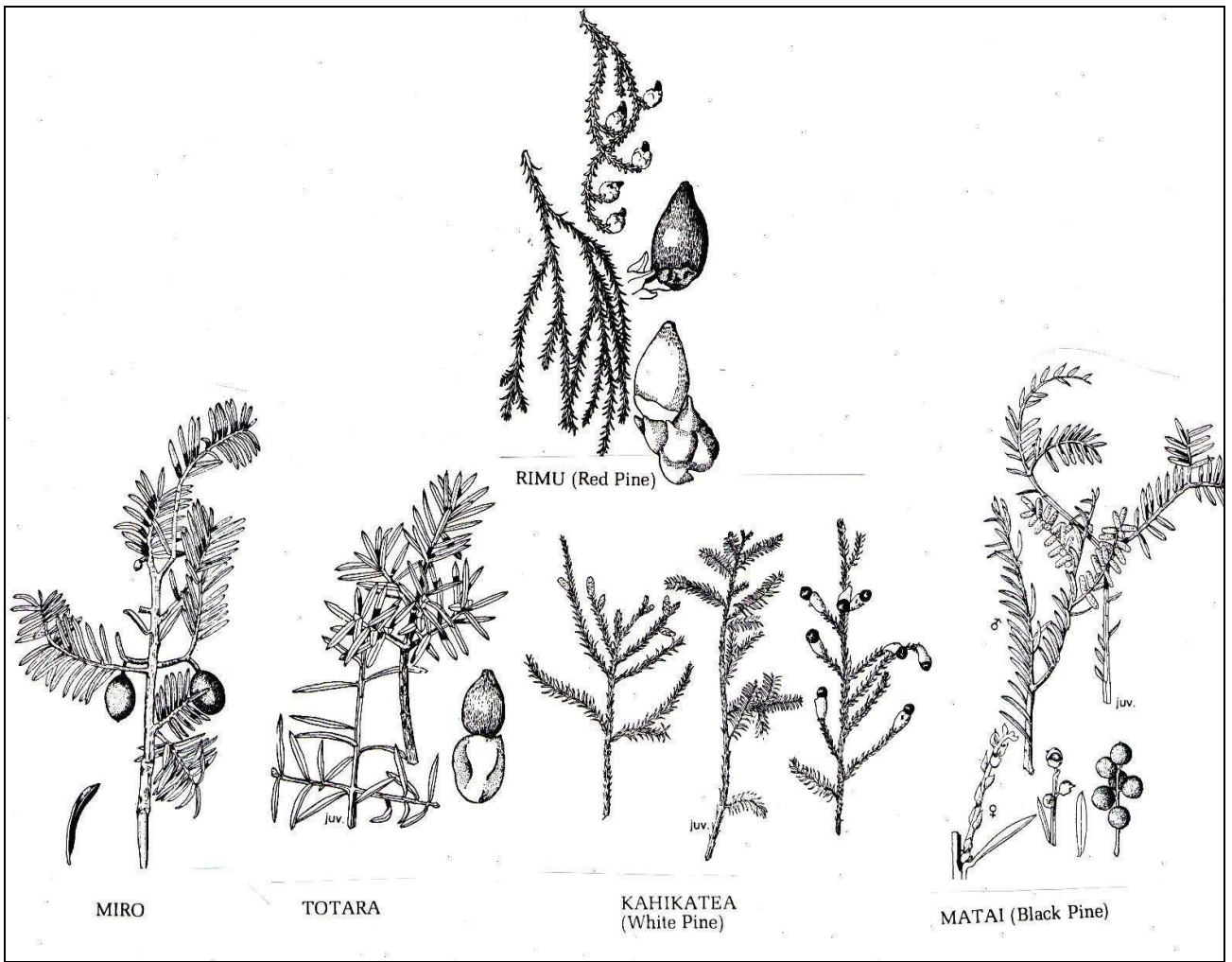
Podocarps are gymnosperms (conifers). There are two broad divisions. They are:

1. those mainly northern hemisphere species with true cones, such as pines, cypresses, spruces and (in our own part of the world) kauri.
2. predominantly found in the southern hemisphere such as rimu, miro, totara, kahikatea and matai.

Podocarps are distinguished from pines by their lack of female cones, instead they have a small bright fruit with a succulent pedestal foot which is attractive to birds. Hence the name podocarp, which comes from the Greek word Podocarpus, which means seed with a foot referring to the shape of the tree's fruit.

Podocarps include five of New Zealand's greatest trees (Note: there are more species than this but they aren't all trees) They are some of the tallest in New Zealand. They are tōtara, kahikatea, matai, miro and rimu. (See attached copy of the interpretation panel from River Rd) Podocarps outstrip most of the true pines in longevity, and resemble the redwoods in their prolonged age, size and majesty.

These trees here are hundreds of years old.



Trunks

Tōtara have straight trunks with stringy red bark, which peels off in long strips. (Please don't do that.)

Kahikatea have grey bark with large buttressed roots.

Matai bark is bluish-black hammer marked and flakes off the trunk in chunks leaving a reddish scar.

Miro bark looks like it has hammer marks.

Rimu have dark brown bark, which scales off in large flakes.

8.1 TASK

- Touch the bark what does it feel like?
- Look on the ground and see what fruit you can find:
Tōtara Fruit A round red berry with black foot.
Kahikatea Fruit A round orange berry with black foot
Matai Fruit A round blue black fruit
Miro An oval red berry
Rimu Red/orange berry with the same colour foot.
- How many different podocarps can you see here?
- Draw the bark pattern or do a bark rubbing of at least one of the trees. This makes it easier to identify in the future.
- Try a bark rubbing. Using a clean sheet of paper and a crayon. Place the paper on a section a section of trunk and with the crayon on its side; rub it up and down on the paper to reproduce the bark pattern below. Be careful not to damage the bark in the process.
- Measure the girth of the tree? *(If you measure the round a mature tree you will get a rough idea of its age because its age corresponds to the circumference in inches (1inch is 2.5 cm). Therefore a tree that is 24 inches is about 24 years old.)*