

Waka taua Photo: Stacy White.



Traditional Māori uses of trees

Tōtara were one of the trees used to make 'waka taua': single hulled canoes. Berries were eaten as food. Its branches were used as friction sticks for the fire lighting with māhoe.

Tarata/ Lemonwood

There are accounts of our ancestors in NZ chewing the gum of tarata for bad breath.

Building and construction

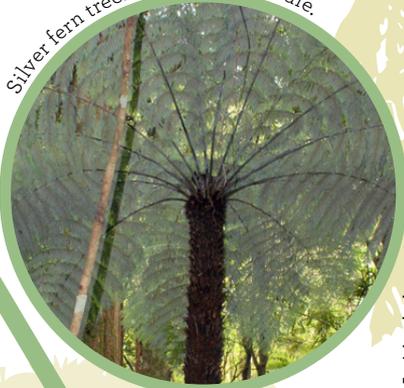
Native timbers (e.g., kauri, kahikatea, mātai, rimu and others) were used regularly by early settlers for building houses, furniture and other items. Rata timber is incredibly hard, strong and durable.

Other timbers had different properties useful for certain things, e.g., kahikatea was used to make butter boxes in the early 1900's, because it didn't make the butter smell.

Māhoe/ Whiteywood

With tōtara, was used for fire lighting because māhoe is very soft and easy to ignite. People twirled a hardwood stick like a tōtara branch on the māhoe creating fire through friction.

Silver fern tree. Photo: Phil Bendle.



Cultural connections

Ponga/Silver Fern: Silver fern is the namesake and generally regarded as a symbol of the New Zealand Silver Ferns netball team.

Kauri: Tāne Mahuta in Waipoua Forest, Northland (our largest known living kauri tree) has become world famous and iconic. This tree represents Tāne Mahuta (Lord/atua of the forest).

Native trees and their connections with people

Tane Mahuta. Photo: ?



Horoeaka/ Lancewood

In the past Māori would select a young horoeaka and twist it into a certain shape that then grew to become a tokotoko (ceremonial staff).

Photo: Te Papa Tongarewa



Kauri furniture. Photo: National Library New Zealand



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