PLANTS AND VEGETABLES

Photos: Mikis van Geffen and Joseph Potangaroa unless acknowledged otherwise.
KARAKIA

Te Harakeke, Te Korari
*Flax*

Ngā taonga whakarere iho
*the treasure passed down to us*

*by the sky, the land, the ancestors*

Homai he oranga mō mātou
*gives us health*

Tihei mauri ora
*for our life force*
PLANTS

Here are a sample of plants. The ones chosen here can easily be found. Most of them are on the side of roads but all can be found in reserves and in the forest.

BRACKEN FERN (ARUHE)

Rahurahu can be found by roadside fence lines and on the edge of forests.

The aruhe or roots of rahurahu growing in deep soil were a staple food with the plant being cultivated to provide aruhe. Once pounded and roasted the fibrous root was eaten. This was not good for the teeth. More recently it has been found that aruhe is not so good for you. The branches were used to catch koura.

BULLRUSH (RAUPŌ)

Raupō grows quite happily in drains along the sides of roads. You will also find it on the edge of wetlands on farms and in reserves. There is a good stand in Henley Lake in Masterton.

Raupō grows alongside flax in swamps, rivers and lakes. Raupō serves many purposes not to mention the shelter it provides for insects and fish.

A loaf called pua can be made from the yellow pollen of the stick heads in summer. The pollen is added to water and then baked for two hours. The root called kōreirei can be eaten. The white fluff on the stalk heads was used as stuffing for mattresses and poi. The leaves are good for weaving and used to be used as a thatch for the roofs of buildings. You can make a play raft out of the sticks.
Puawananga is a vine. The pure white flowers of the male puawananga cover host trees like a beautiful cloak. This happens in spring and if you happen to be close enough the smell is delightful.

Female flowers are smaller and not as pretty but only the girls produce a fluffy seed head that is nice itself.

Puawananga flowering are an indicator that summer is on the way.

Harakeke is called flax but it isn't really a flax. With its long leaves it looks like flax. Real Flax does not have sticks.

Harakeke is a plant that has always thrived in the Wairarapa. You see different varieties of harakeke all over the place. In days gone by special gardens of harakeke were grown with plenty of attention given to them to make sure the whole plantation was in top condition.

Harakeke can be used in so many ways including

There are forms of weaving to make items that support daily activities. These include kete (baskets), whāriki (mats) kākahu, (clothing), taura (rope) and kupenga (fish nets).
HARAKEKE continued

Harakeke supports the gathering of kai from the ngahere (bush), moana (sea) and awa (river) which is why it is a very important plant. Cutting flax is ruled by strict procedures; only outer leaves are taken so that the young inner shoots can keep growing.

Some kete are made for specific kai. A kete for paua, one for pipi, one for koura and so on. Each has a different thickness and size depending on what is being gathered and how many are supposed to be caught. Individual kete used to be destroyed after being used just once. The kete would be burnt as the activity of gathering kai was tapu but the kai itself rendered the kete noa (safe) once placed inside.

Harakeke is good for healing health problems too. Gum from the base of the leaves is good for wounds and burns. The same gum mixed with water is used to cure diarrhoea.

The korari or sticks are good for catching games.

HEBE (KOROMIKO)

The photos are of real koromiko so that it is not confused with other hebes that are around.

Koromiko is a popular plant in gardens and in reserves. Koromiko likes sunlight so you will find it naturally growing on the edge of forests.

It is a very useful plant that can help cure sores, headaches and ulcers. But is is best known for stopping diarrhoea and dysentery if you chew the centre tips of new leaves.

SEE ALSO TREES SECTION, page T9
KIEKIE

Kiekie are the small flax-like plants seen living on other trees. They are most likely to be seen in the mountains. Kiekie produces the Māori banana (ureuro) a fruit that is ready to eat during winter.

The inner leaves of the kiekie were used to make the finest whāriki (mats).

NEW ZEALAND NIGHTSHADE (POROPORO)

Poroporo is a native shrub although it can grow to around 4 metres tall. You find poroporo in all sorts of places where its pretty purple flowers and large ripe orange berries stand out.

Only the ripe orange berries can be eaten because the green unripe ones and the rest of the plant is poisonous.

Poroporo leaves are good for skin conditions after the leaf has either been crushed or boiled.

During the 1970s a business started using poroporo leaves to make contraceptives a use that Māori women may have known in earlier times. The business did not last long because it was cheaper to make the drugs overseas.

SEE ALSO BERRIES SECTION, PAGE BE6
Raupeti is an introduced plant that is usually thought of as a weed. It finds its way into gardens, in between crops, on the outskirts of lowland forests and on roadsides during summer.

Raupeti produces lots of berries that are toxic when they are green.

The reason that raupeti is included here is because the berries can be eaten when they are black or fully ripe.

Kareao is a vine that is found in the undergrowth of dense forest. Young kareao on the forest floor looks like asparagus but the mature vines can’t be mistaken for anything else as they loop around trees or look like a tangled mess on the ground. The bright red berries of kareao catch the eye when walking through the forest.

How many ways can you use one plant? One way that kids enjoy is using kareao as a swing, sometimes it grows in a U shape that can be sat on.

It is best known as the main material used to make hina-ki (eel traps), baskets and crayfish pots. Otherwise it can be used as a rope for tying things together or towing.

The young ‘asparagus’ shoots can be eaten raw or cooked. Cutting a young stem will produce water which is very useful in an emergency.

Boiled roots can cure scabies, sore stomachs and fever.
Toetoe are tussocks or big grasses. Most New Zealanders would know toetoe because of the feathery flowers on the end of long stalks. Plenty would have accidentally discovered that the leaves of toetoe are very sharp and can leave a nasty cut on your hand.

Toetoe stalks are used in making tukutuku panels but in the past were wall and ceiling linings on houses.

The stalk of the toetoe can be eaten, firstly as a food and secondly to cure bladder and kidney ailments. The well-known white plumes of the toetoe stalks can be squashed to make a pad that will stop bleeding. A paste can be made to relieve burns from burning toetoe and then adding the ashes to water.

There are plenty of games to be made up using a toetoe stalk.

Toetoe should not be confused with Pampas grass which comes from South America.
VEGETABLES

Try to grow these huawhenua in your own mara. You can buy different varieties in shops. Even though they might not be “Māori” ones it is the learning, enjoyment and eating that’s more important. And anyway even the Māori ones came from other countries.

Kia tika te mārama
When the moon is right
me hakatō e ngā maara
then plant the crops
ATUATANGA | PLANTS AND VEGETABLES

Potato (rewai or taewa)

Squash (kamokamo)
Sweet potato (kumara)

Karuparera

Huakaroro

Tutaekuri

Moemoe