

WHITE PINE - kahikatea

Dacrycarpus dacrydioides

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For Māori, the kahikatea had many uses. The berry (koroi) was an important food source and the wood was used for making bird spears. Also, the soot from burning the wood, supplied a pigment for traditional tattooing (ta moko).

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It is said that before extensive logging, trees of 80 m in height were known

Growth form

The tree grows to a height of 55 metres with a trunk exceeding 1 metre in diameter and is the tallest of New Zealand forest trees. Leaves are only small (3 to 8 mm long), and twisted at the base. Young plants are very sparse in their branching habit and in leaves.

Fruits

Seeds are small and rounded, at the end of a red berry. The seeds are dispersed by birds, which eat the fleshy fruit and pass the seeds in their droppings.

Timber properties

Timber was not initially sought after by Non-Māori settlers as it was less attractive, not as strong or resilient to rot like other timbers available. However, because kahikatea wood does not have an odour, and is clean and lightweight, it was used to make boxes for exporting butter from Australia and New Zealand in the 1880s.

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