

The Kauri

of Waipahihi Botanical Gardens

In the gardens you will find a planted Kauri Grove as well as individual trees mixed in with other native species. All of these trees vary in age from 'rickers' to adolescent and early maturing trees shedding their lower branches. The kauri grove is thriving despite the cooler temperatures and is an excellent example of what a kauri forest would look like.

Kauri

Agathis australis

The kauri is a native tree that is found in the warm, northern parts of the North Island, in particular Auckland, the Coromandel Peninsula and Northland. It is one of the largest and longest-living trees in the world, living for over 1,500 years and its trunk can be over 2 metres in diameter. The kauri has been successfully grown as far south as Stewart Island in the South Island.



Description

The kauri has two main growing phases:

- The young kauri plant grows straight upwards towards the forest canopy in the shape of a narrow conical crown with branches going out along the length of the trunk. The young kauri tree is called a 'ricker'; a name used for masts and spars by British sailors.
- Once the kauri has reached the canopy the trunk thickens, the top branches form a crown, the lower branches are shed resulting in the clean straight trunk.



The bark is unusual in that it flakes, protecting the kauri from parasitic plants; these flakes accumulate around the base of the trunk and can be up to 2 metres in depth.

The leaves of the kauri are 3 to 7cm long and 1cm wide and are arranged in opposite pairs on the stem. The seed cones are 5 to 7cm in diameter and mature 18 to 20 months after pollination; when the seed cones disintegrate, winged seeds are released which are then dispersed by the wind.

Uses

Kauri timber has been used for boat building, crafts, carving and building houses. The trunks of young kauri were ideal for ship masts and spars. The gum, too, became essential in the manufacture of varnishes and other resin-based products.

Conservation

Kauri forests in the past covered 1.2million hectares of the Northland area. However, the demand for timber and farmland has reduced these forests. Kauri is now found in small remaining pockets in the Waipoua Forest (Northland), Waitakere Ranges, Great Barrier Island and on the Coromandel Peninsula. A new threat facing the kauri is the kauri dieback or kauri collar rot, *Phytophthora agathidicida*, of which there is no known cure. There are extensive efforts to protect the kauri where it is known to be affected by this disease. The kauri in the Waipahihi Botanical Gardens have not yet been affected by Kauri dieback and will play a key role in protecting this species in the future.