

## New Zealand has a new favourite plant!

The small, white-flowered willowherb (*Epilobium microphyllum*), found in riverbeds and gravelly coastal areas, snatched victory in the final day of an annual poll organised by the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network, which has been tallying votes for the past eight weeks. With a day to run, it appeared that the poll would be won by the Chatham Island forget-me-not (*Myosotidium hortensia*) or New Zealand's bamboo rush (*Sporadanthus ferrugineus*). The number 1 spot changed six times in the last few days of voting. Last year the poll was topped by the Chatham Island Christmas tree.

Organised by the Network, the web-based poll covers plants of every kind, from the smallest ferns and grasses, to lowland trees and the mighty forest podocarps. Network President Professor Ian Spellerberg says the whole top-ten has changed, with previous winners such as pohutukawa and Cook's scurvy grass nowhere to be seen. This year's 10 most favourite plants include tawari, nikau palm, northern rata, kakabeak, coral broom, Poor Knights lily and the water brome. Over 100 species were voted for out of a flora of 2360 species.

The Network is not surprised that New Zealand's iconic species failed to make the top ten. The poll illustrates that New Zealand's love of native plants is far deeper than some of its national emblems. Voters have also taken the opportunity to comment about the plant of their choice and, in many cases, this reveals a deeper connection between the physical environment and national identity.

"There are many people who have a real love of our native flora, and this is a chance for them to express what is important to them," says Professor Spellerberg.

### The Top 10 for 2007 are:

The full results and comments may be found on the Network web site – [www.nzpcn.org.nz](http://www.nzpcn.org.nz)



1. *Epilobium microphyllum*, willowherb.  
Photo: Naomi Lorimer.



2. *Myosotidium hortensia*, Chatham Island forget-me-not, kopakopa, kopukapuka.  
Photo: John Sawyer.



3. *Sporadanthus ferrugineus*, bamboo rush, giant wire rush.  
Photo: Jeremy Rolfe.



4. *Ixerba brexioides*, tawari, whakou (flowers).  
Photo: John Smith-Dodsworth.



5. *Rhopalostylis sapida*, nikau palm.  
Photo: Jeremy Rolfe.



6. *Metrosideros robusta*, northern rata.  
Photo: Jeremy Rolfe.



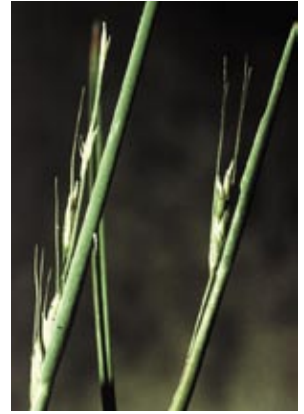
7. *Clianthus maximus*,  
kakabeak, kowhai ngutu-  
kaka.  
Photo: Peter de Lange.



8. *Carmichaelia*  
*crassicaulis* subsp.  
*crassicaulis*, coral broom.  
Photo: John Barkla.



9. *Xeronema callistemon* f.  
*callistemon*, Poor Knights lily,  
raupo-taranga.  
Photo: Gillian Crowcroft.



10. *Amphibromus*  
*fluitans*, water brome.  
Photo: Colin Ogle.