



## THE 2003 VOTE FOR THE TOP TEN MOST FAVOURITE NATIVE PLANTS

### Voting 2003

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The 2003 vote for the most favourite native plants was greeted with much enthusiasm with 364 votes (104 up on the previous year). Many people wrote to say how much they welcomed the opportunity to take part. The entries came from school children (including some entries which were very colourful and well illustrated) and adults living in both New Zealand and Australia. One entry came in the form of a delightful booklet. This was 'Whakaaro Aroha' by Toi Te Rito Maihi.

In some cases the entries were simple lists with no explanations. In many cases the names of the plants were weaved into a text such as "*I see the mighty Tawhai waving at me through my bedroom window, its strong branches moving with the wind.....and beyond Whauwhaupaku lies its leaves to the sun letting off lime greenish hues*".

Most of the entries included personal explanations and many of these were quite moving, almost poetic. Here are just a three examples: 'Manuka - What would we do without it? Sprays of white daisy-like flowers and gangly branches on any bushy hill, ready for making huts, seating, fencing or wood fire for billy tea. This is Manuka, the delicious smell of early fires - and it's a lovely garden plant'. 'Nikau Palms - full ripe and pregnant nikau frond bases, shooting out pacific fronds signalling out tropical heritage, big fat kereru feeding on bright red berries. Pink starry flowers so abundant. Left and right handed trees'. 'Southern rata - brings back memories of travelling through the Otira George at Christmas time and seeing gorgeous blooms contrasting with native green foliage'. The 2003 vote resulted in the following top ten being the most favourite (not much difference between 2002 and 2003):

### **The 2003 vote for the top ten New Zealand native plants:**

1. Pohutukawa *Metrosideros* spp.
2. Kowhai *Sophora* spp. (Number 5 in 2002)
3. ti kouka, cabbage tree *Cordyline* spp. (Number 2 in 2002)
4. Rimu *Dacrydium cupressinum* (Number 6 in 2002)
5. Nikau palm *Rhopalostylis sapida* (Number 4 in 2002)
6. Kauri *Agathis australis* (Number 3 in 2002)
7. Harakeke, flax *Phormium* spp. (Number 8 in 2002)
8. Clematis spp.
9. Tree fern
10. Manuka *Leptospermum scoparium*

A few other native plants were very popular and these included the following

Totara *Podocarpus totara*

Rata *Metrosideros* spp.

Horoeka, Lancewood *Pseudopanax crassifolius*

Ponga, Silver fern *Cyathea dealbata*

Puriri *Vitex lucens*

Beech *Nothofagus* spp.

Kahikatea *Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*

Kaka beak *Clianthus puniceus*

Kotukutuku, Tree fuschia *Fuchsia exorticata*

The entries were drawn at the Lincoln Police Station and the results (winners have already been notified) were:

First Prize: Mrs. W.N. Payne.

Second prize: Jill Moore.

Third prize: Mrs. L.M. Coton.

Why are pohutukawas so popular? Perhaps the following examples of quotes from the many entries gives some idea why they are so much loved. 'better than any jungle gym as a kid!' 'Should be New Zealand's national tree. Grows everywhere and the flowers are beautiful'. 'A comfortable tree - providing little nooks to sit and read on a summers day'. 'they have tenacity and strength-growing on cliff faces and leaning out to sea'. 'They mean summers and family picnics in the shade of massive trees - sand flecked with red stamens'. 'They are iconic!'. 'Pohutukawas - bush, beach and blue sea - tuis, a trunk to sit on, a picnic on the reddened shady sand and a boat moored off the beach'. 'Pohutakawas - its Christmas'.

One other favourite is worth a mention or is it a love-hate relationship? Many people hate cabbage trees because of the leaves which become entangled in lawn mowers. So what did people say about the cabbage tree; here are a few quotes. 'Cabbage trees are evocative of New Zealand. I love the old specimens. At this time of year the heavy scent is beautiful and hangs in the air'. 'Cabbage tress - beautiful and distinct, evoking memories of New Zealand landscapes'. 'I use to think of them as ugly but now they are one of my favourites'. 'A New Zealand Icon and great for the birds'. 'Cabbage tress like flax - there's variety and colour for every garden'. 'Cabbage trees - archetypal New Zealand tree but often overlooked'. 'Cabbage tress - the quintessential New Zealand of the open countryside'. 'Brilliant white or cream flowers and wonderful scent'. 'Cabbage trees - often taken for granted - but I fell in love with them after returning from overseas'. 'Cabbage trees - have leaves to make a fan - preparation of summer to come'.

There seems to be much support for an annual vote for the ten most favourite New Zealand Native plants. Interesting however that at least one person suggested having a vote for the ten most hated exotic plants! Examples given included Phoenix palms, willow trees and Thujas. Interesting idea indeed but there may be a danger of fuelling a debate about natives versus exotics.