

Facts about Rongoā Rākau



Rongoā rākau (plant medicine) is only one part of rongoā Māori (Māori medicine). Rongoā Māori also includes physical therapies such as massage, and the more spiritual side of a person, including their connection to nature. In rongoā Māori the overall wellbeing of a person is considered, not just the symptom that is obvious.

All material in *Nanny Mihi's Medicine* is provided for your information only and not as a guide for prescribing medicines or curing illnesses.

Tikanga, mauri and *wairua* are important in rongoā Māori.

- **Tikanga** The traditions. The rules. The rituals of respect.
- **Mauri** The life's essence. The gift of life. The light that shines from within.
- **Wairua** The connection between the spiritual and physical world. The connections between all in nature. The connections between past and present. The energy that passes through all of us – including plants and people.

Collecting rongoā

When you collect rongoā, pause and give thanks, then think about what you need the medicine for. A small karakia (prayer) to Tāne-mahuta, or even your chosen plants, will help you focus and find the right ones to collect.

Tradition

- It's best to collect in the morning.
- The sunny side of the plant contains more medicine.
- Try to pick from several plants instead of just one.
- Leaves with holes have stronger medicine.

Science now tells us:

- Plants have a burst of genetic activity in the early morning.
- Plants that grow in stronger sunlight have higher antioxidant properties.
- There will be slight variations in medicinal properties between plants.
- Plants react to attack (being eaten) by increasing chemical compounds in the area being eaten.



Taking care

Be respectful of our ngāhere (bush) and what it offers. Remember the mauri and wairua? Every living thing plays an important role in te Taiao (the natural world).

Be careful not to pick too much or more than you need. Preserving natural resources takes care and consideration of others.

Do not pick where people have used chemicals or poisons.

Remember to return any scraps back to the earth; this helps to feed the plants you have taken from.

Plant medicine is not new

Cultures from all around the world have used their native plants as medicine for centuries. Plant medicine may be more common than you think.

Have you ever had lemon or garlic for a cold?

Why do we brush our teeth with minty flavours?

Why did people start drinking coffee?

Can you think of other plants that people use for their health?



Activities

In *Nanny Mibi's Medicine* you have learned a little about rongoā rākau. The end pages have some information on plant remedies to get you started but there are many more amazing native plants with medicinal properties. Who knows where your research may take you?

Start your own notebook

Perhaps you could begin by finding some of the more common native plants and making your own notebook.

There are many techniques you could use to illustrate your notebook.

- Place a sheet of paper over the bark or leaves you have found. Rub a crayon sideways over them to make a leaf rubbing.
- Collect samples and press them between sheets of paper in a heavy book.
- Draw them yourself with coloured pencils or watercolour paints.
- Zoom in to photograph them close up and print them.

Website references

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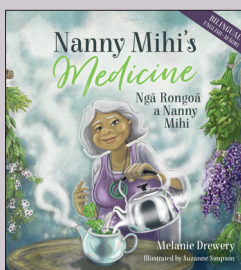
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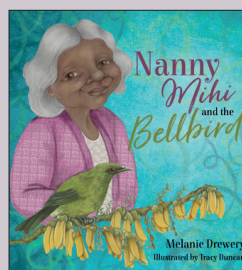
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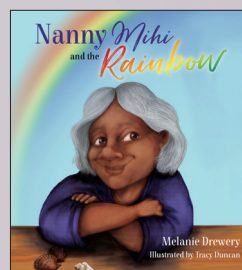
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USING RONGOĀ • TE WHAKAMAHI RONGOĀ

Here are some of the ways plants are used in rongoā rākau.

Kawakawa

Make a tea by soaking fresh or dried leaves in boiling water. This can be used:

- as a health tonic.
- for digestion.
- as an anti-inflammatory.
- for healing of kidneys, liver, lungs.
- to relieve pain from arthritis and gout.

Leaves with holes have more concentrated medicine in them. Some people drink kawakawa tea every day.

Harakeke (New Zealand flax)

- Scrapings are good for blisters.
- A soft leaf in the shoe is good for blisters too.
- Gum from young shoots helps heal burns.
- The thick end of a leaf can be used as a splint and bandaged on with the soft end.

Kawakawa

Mahia mai he tī mā te tutu i ngā rau mata, rau maroke rānei ki rō wai koropupū. He pai tēnei hei:

- inu rongoā.
- āwhina i te nakunaku kai.
- whakaheke i te kakā.
- whakaora i ngā tākihi, i te ate, i ngā pūkahukahu.
- whakamāmā i te mamea o te kaikōiwi, o te koute hoki.

He nui ake te kukū o te rongoā o ngā rau kōhao. Arā ētahi tāngata ka inu tī kawakawa ia rā, ia rā.

Harakeke

- He pai ngā wakunga hei whakamauru hoipū.
- He pai hoki te tuku i tētahi rau ngohengohe ki rō hū hei whakamauru hoipū.
- Ka whakamahu te pia rito i ngā werahanga kiri.
- Ka whakamahia te pito mātotoru o te rau hei pāpā kiri, ā, ka tākaia mā te pito ngohengohe.

Kānuka, Mānuka

Steep kānuka or mānuka in boiling or very hot water.

- Breathe in the steam to clear sinuses.
- The steam is also good for other breathing problems.
- Steam in a room can be a sleep aid.
- Bathing in the liquid can relieve aches and pains.

Kānuka bark is stronger than mānuka bark for a soak.

Ngaio

- Rubbing the juice of the leaves on your skin stops mosquitos and sandflies from biting.

Koromiko

Koromiko has lot of uses. You can:

- smell crushed leaves for a headache.
- bandage crushed leaves onto a wound to prevent infection.
- gargle the liquid from boiled leaves to soothe a sore throat.
- use young buds to help cure diarrhoea.

Koromiko was sent to soldiers in World War Two for use against dysentery!

Tītoki

- Crush fruit/seeds to make an oil for rubbing on bruises.

Tī kōuka

Tī kōuka is also known as the cabbage tree. Ways to use it include:

- scraping the leaf to make ointment for cuts or scratches.
- soaking the leaves in boiling water and using the cooled liquid to bathe cuts.
- bandaging the ointment on to an ulcer to help draw it out.

Māori once used the heart and root of tī kōuka for food.

Puriri

- An infusion of leaves is good to rub on back aches and sprains.



Kānuka, Mānuka

Tutua te kānuka, te mānuka rānei ki rō wai koropupū, wai tino wera rānei.

- Hāngia te mamaoa hei whakawātea i ngā pakohu ihu.
- He pai hoki te mamaoa mō ētahi atu take whakararu hā.
- Ko tētahi atu mahi a te mamaoa he āwhina i te moe.
- Mā te kaukau i te wai, ka mauru ngā mamae.

He kaha ake te kiri kānuka tērā i te kiri mānuka hei tutu.

Ngaio

- Mā te mirimiri i te wai o ngā rau ki tō kiri e mutu ai tā te waeroa me tā te namunamu ngau.

Koromiko

He nui ngā painga o te koromiko. He pai te:

- hongī i te kakara o ngā rau kōpenu mō te mähunga ānini.
- tākai i ngā rau kōpenu ki te motu hei ārai i te pokenga.
- whakararā i te wai o ngā rau koropupū hei whakamaene i te korokoro mamae.
- whakamahi i ngā toroihi mō te mate tikotiko.

I tukuna te koromiko ki ngā hōia o Te Pakanga Tuarua o te Ao hei ātete i te mate kōea!

Tītoki

- Kōpenua ngā hua/kākano kia mahia mai he hinu hei panipani ki ngā marū.

Tī kōuka

E mōhiotia ana te tī kōuka ko te 'cabbage tree'. Ko ētahi o ona painga he:

- waku i te rau kia puta mai he puru waiwai hei pani ki ngā motu, ki ngā rapinga rānei.
- tutu i ngā rau ki rō wai koropupū, ā, ka whakamahia te wai mātao hei toutou i ngā motu.
- tākai i te pani ki te keha hei unu i te pirau.

I ngā wā o mua, kaingia ai e te Māori te iho me te pakiaka o te tī kōuka.

Puriri

- He pai te mirimiri i te whaonga rau ki ngā mamae me ngā takoki tuarā.

