



TEA TREE

Maori name.	Manuka
Common name.	Tea Tree
Botanical name.	<i>Leptospermum scoparium</i>

What does it look like?

Manuka grows into a shrub or small tree, varying in height up to 8 metres. The narrow, pointy leaves are prickly and have a nice, sharp perfume when crushed. The brownish bark sits loosely on the trunk and branches in long strips. Manuka has single small white flowers which generally bloom in spring and summer. The seed capsules are brown and woody - the seed ripens by late autumn, but stays in the hard capsules until well into the following summer.

Where does it grow?

Manuka is common throughout the North, South and Stewart Islands, in lowland to low alpine regions up to 1400 metres above sea level. It can be found in many different habitats (places to live) including wetlands, river gravels and dry hillsides. When mature, it is very tolerant of drought, waterlogging, strong winds and frost.

Growing tips . . . in your plant growing unit

Though hardy, manuka doesn't like to have its growth checked - so never trim or prune it - you will seriously set back its growth. Seedlings may need potting on from the root trainers into milk cartons.

Planting out for soil conservation

Manuka is a very important pioneering plant: its growth is the first stage towards the growth of a new native forest. By creating shade and shelter from the wind, it provides an excellent nursery for many young native plants to grow up in. Then, as they get taller and overtop it, the manuka dies away as a result of being shaded. It is excellent for revegetating bare, eroded slopes and can grow on poorer, colder, wetter and more acidic sites than kanuka. Another advantage of planting manuka for soil conservation is that browsing animals like sheep, cattle and goats don't often eat it.

Used to ...

Manuka's hard red wood was widely used by Maori for everything from paddles, weapons, spade blades, weeders, bird spears and mauls to house

building. The bark was used for making water containers and the inner bark as a waterproof layer for roofing. Manuka is a first class firewood and was also used by early settlers for tool handles and fencing. Captain Cook and early settlers used the green leaves to make a reasonable substitute for tea (and beer) - hence the name "Teatree". Produced mostly on East Cape, Manuka oil has anti-worm, anti-bacterial and insecticidal properties and is sold in New Zealand and many other countries. Manuka honey is a very old remedy for bacterial infections and is a very popular honey.

Did you know . . . ?

Manuka is affected by Manuka 'blight', which can eventually kill it. The blight looks like black soot on the bark. Kanuka is often confused with manuka, but doesn't get blight and has softer leaves.



Prepared by the Trees for Survival Trust, with the help of the Lotteries Grants Board. Schools may copy this material and use it for educational purposes.

Picture from Lindsay Poole and Nancy Adams, 1990, *Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand*, DSIR Publishing