



KARO

Maori name. Karo
Common name. Pittosporum
Botanical name: *Pittosporum crassifolium*

What does it look like?

Karo is a shrub or small tree which grows fairly rapidly up to nine metres tall. It has thick leathery leaves growing rather densely with white undersides and produces sweetly scented red flowers in spring.

Where does it grow?

Karo is naturally coastal and is found along forest margins and streamsides from North Cape to Poverty Bay. It grows best on moist but well drained soils: it is not easy to establish on heavy wet soil. Once established it can tolerate frost and salt laden winds.

Growing tips . . . in your plant growing unit

Karo plants are susceptible to attack by Pittosporum chemid, an insect which sucks sap, causing loss of vitality and disfigured leaves. This can be controlled by spraying with an insecticide or a mixture of sunlight soap and water. Be sure to spray the underside of the leaf, because this is where the insects attack.

Karo do not need to be potted on from the root trainers. Trim the tops of the plant in late summer/autumn as they approach 30 cm in height. This stops them getting "leggy". Leggy plants do not grow as well as more compact forms when they are planted out, so regular trimming will help them establish.

Planting out for soil conservation

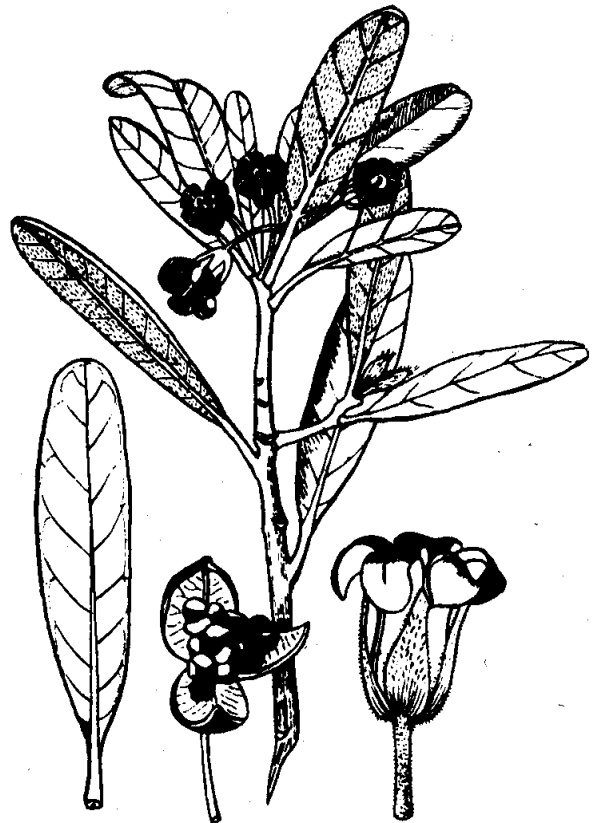
Karo is an excellent shelter plant, as it is extremely resistant to wind. It is particularly good near the coast where salt spray makes it hard for other plants to establish.

Used to ...

Although valued as a shelter tree, Karo appears to have had no specific usage by Maori. It is not even particularly good firewood - but it is an attractive coloniser.

Did you know . . . ?

There are more than 160 species of Pittosporum in the Southern Hemisphere. All of the 26 New Zealand species are found only in this country and nowhere else in the world. They are some of the most popular native garden plants in the country.



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.