



## MAPOU

Maori name: Mapou  
Common name: Mapou  
Botanical name.: *Myrsine australis*

### What does it look like?

Mapou is a quick growing shrub or small tree that grows up to six metres high. The tough, reddish green leaves are 2 to 5 cm long with distinct wavy edges. While the bark on a mature trunk is grey, the young branchlets and branches are distinctly reddish in colour.

### Where does it grow?

Mapou is found from sea level to 900 metres throughout both the North Island and South Island. It is common along forest margins and in scrubland. It can not tolerate waterlogged soils for long periods of time, nor severe drought conditions.

### Growing tips . . . in your plant growing unit

Mapou grows easily from seed. Trim the tops of the plant in late summer/autumn as they approach 30 cm in height, to prevent them getting leggy.

### Planting out for soil conservation

Because mapou is hardy and very resistant to wind, it is a good shelter plant. It is also a good primary colonising plant on bare sites - it is able to get itself established and provide shelter for more sensitive plants put in later on.

### Used to ...

Maori boiled mapou leaves to make an infusion (tea) for toothache. They also used the leaves as relief for arthritic problems, as a remedy for skin disease, intestinal worms and as a general tonic. The branch wood was used for digging sticks and adze handle sockets.

In European times the hard timber has been used for building, although its most popular use has probably been for firewood.

### Did you know . . . ?

Mapou produce very small black fruit in summer (popular with birds) which grow directly on the stem of the plant, not in the usual place at the end of branches and twigs.



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.