

# Growing for Auckland

## Native plant cultivars

A cultivar is a plant that has been selected from the wild or bred by horticulturalists for some new or different quality for your garden e.g. colour, leaves, fragrance or form.

You can recognise a cultivar by its name - first comes the botanical name of the original plant species, followed by name of the cultivar (in quotation marks) e.g. *Leptospermum scoparium* 'Wiri Sandra'.

Native plant cultivars with the prefix 'Wiri' have been bred here at the Auckland Botanic Gardens.

## Gardening tips for native plant cultivars

- If you have a coastal garden, coprosmas are useful as they are reasonably hardy to strong wind and drought. *Coprosma virescens* is a great example.
- To attract bees, try a pretty *Leptospermum* cultivar. Flower colours range from scarlet to deep rose and many shades of pink and white. We recommend *Leptospermum* 'Wiri Sandra'.
- Clip topiary regularly, ideally before periods of vigorous growth. *Muehlenbeckia astonii* makes a great topiary.
- Some native plants make great hedges - the frequency of pruning will depend on the species. Faster growing plants such *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (kohuhu) will require trimming three times a year whereas slower growing *Podocarpus totara* only once a year.
- Hedges should be shaped so they are narrower at the top than the base. This allows more light to reach the hedge sides, prevents it from becoming top heavy and unstable, and is easier to maintain.

## Native plants for Auckland

At the Auckland Botanic Gardens we monitor, trial and record the performance of our plants so that we can identify and recommend plants that grow well in Auckland conditions.

Our substantial collection of native plants is spread across several unique garden areas. Our Native Plant Ideas garden is designed to inspire ideas for subtropical, coastal and courtyard gardens. The Harakeke collection is home to a comprehensive range of weaving flaxes, traditionally used by Māori.

Endangered native plants feature in the Threatened Native Plants garden. We have 10 hectares of native forest to explore as well as a Native Plant Identification Trail to teach visitors how to identify notable plants from the New Zealand forest.

## Native living roof

There is lots of research from overseas on exotic plants suitable for living roofs, but using New Zealand native plants on roofs is relatively new. Our native living roof on the Potter Children's Garden toilet block is a trial. We test many different native species hoping to find plants we can confidently recommend for NZ roofs.

The roof is dry and hot which is a difficult habitat to establish plants. Coastal plants that cling onto cliffs faces and rocky outcrops seem to like it on the roof which is not surprising as they are used to little soil and hot dry conditions. So far native iris (*Libertia peregrinans*), needle grass (*Austrostipa stipoides*), and *Astelia banksii* have done well.

## Native plants

Grow a slice of New Zealand in your home garden with our recommended native plants for Auckland.



Libertia ixioides

### Contact

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Auckland Botanic Gardens  
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Te Kaunihera o Tamaki Makaurau

# Native plants recommended for Auckland gardens



## ***Hebe 'Wiri Desire'***

Vigorous dense shrub 1.3m in height and width with bronze tinted new growth maturing dull green. Dense 7cm racemes of deep rose-pink flowers emerging from delightful buds are abundant from autumn. A most attractive garden subject which generally remains disease free, although not fully hardy.



## ***Asplenium bulbiferum*** (Hen and chicken fern)

This is a lovely bright green fern that produces small plantlets on the fronds. These plantlets can be grown into new plants. Hen and chicken fern does well in a pot as well as indoors. Grow in a shady spot, can tolerate dry conditions.



## ***Sophora fulvida*** (West Coast kōwhai)

Also known as the West Coast kōwhai, this is a beautiful and hardy tree with golden yellow flowers from October to November. It grows naturally in the Auckland region. It is a compact kōwhai that grows in full sun or shade to 4m x 2m wide with a stiff spreading form. Note - all parts of the plant are poisonous.



## ***Astelia chathamica***

This is a large clump-forming plant with silver leaves up to 2m long. It originates from the Chatham Islands where it is endangered. Plant in rich soil and ensure sufficient moisture in summer for it to thrive. Grow in sun to semi shade conditions. Tolerates exposed conditions but can be frost tender.



## ***Pseudopanax x hybrida***

A dark green glossy shrub that grows up to 3m x 3m. Leaves are thick and leathery with 3-5 lobes. Growth is compact and it always looks lovely, lush and green. Small inconspicuous summer flowers are followed by clusters of berries.



## ***Libertia ixioides*** (NZ iris)

*Libertia* are hardy clump forming plants with narrow, upright leaves. Small flowers add interest in spring. Plants grow to a height and width of approximately 40cm. They prefer growing in shade or semi-shade but can handle some sun. Make sure you protect the plants from slugs and snails.



## ***Podocarpus totara 'Matapouri Blue'***

An upright pyramidal habit when young, foliage is a beautiful shade of blue-grey all year round. It grows relatively slowly, so is easy to manage in a small garden. Trim regularly to keep to the size you want. If left alone, it will grow into a large specimen tree. Can be used as a hedge, topiary or espaliered against a wall.



## ***Pittosporums* for hedges**

Small-leaved pittosporums make great hedges. We recommend *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Little Squirt' and *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Wrinkle Blue'. Both are attractive rounded shrubs that are perfect for hedges and respond well to clipping.

## Garden use

The unique habit of many natives can bring some real texture to your garden. Many natives respond well to clipping, so you can experiment with some playful and beautiful shaping.

Try a hedge of *Pittosporum* and *Hebe* contrasted against yellow balls of totara, or a cloud of beautifully clipped *Muehlenbeckia* contrasted against linear flax leaves and architectural nikau palms.



All of the native plants in this leaflet are suitable for growing in small gardens, pots and courtyards.