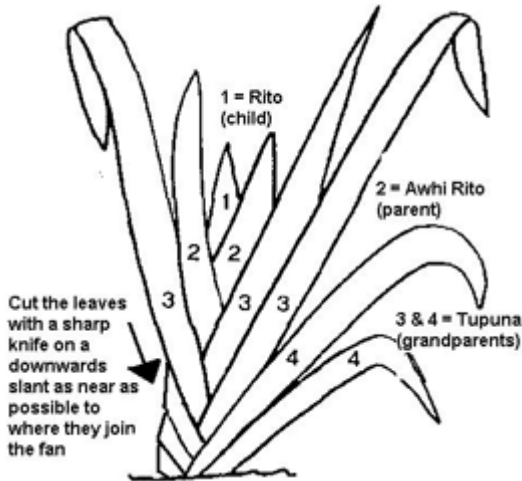


Weaving with Harakeke

Tikanga



Above harakeke plant resource is from:
<https://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/harakeke/>



- Ask permission to cut harakeke in public places from the Council (941 8999) or the property owner
- Never cut the middle three rau / leaves, they need each other's support for the plant to stay alive (unless wanting to stunt growth or gain access to an area)
- Do not cut at night, in rain, when the plant is flowering or when you are menstruating or pregnant (some women don't weave when menstruating, and one teacher told me not to weave when sick either)
- Proper cutting prevents rain from pooling and creating rot/mould, allows for circulation of air and sunlight which prevents bugs and spreading of disease
- Always say a karakia
- Treat the plant and cut leaves with respect (they are your tipuna / ancestors), don't walk on or over them
- Always wash hands after handling harakeke
The sap has a laxative effect
- Use specific tools for harakeke – these tools are not to be used for kai / food
- Very experienced weavers also suggest that collecting when it's windy can produce leaves that aren't as supple to weave with. The plant protects itself in the wind by tightening the fibres in the plant
- Give away – koha – your first project, you could gift it to your whare or your family in order to keep it nearby

Karakia

A karakia is essential for the collection of harakeke. I use a shorter one when collecting at home, the longer one if collecting for a large project, or in a new area, or when I am cleaning up the bush as well as collecting for weaving.

Te Harakeke, te kōrari

Ngā taonga whakarere iho

O te Rangī, O te Papa,

O Hine-te-iwaiwa,

O ngā tūpuna

Homai he oranga mō mātou

Tihei mauri ora!

The plant, the flower stem, handed down from the sky, the earth, our goddess, our ancestors, bring us health!

Whakataua, whakataua, whakataua a Raki e tu nei, a Papa e takoto nei

Kei watea, kia mana

Te Wairua i te ara taka ta o te mauri a Tane-nui-a-Raki, a Haumia-tike-tike me Roko-marae-roa

Ko tiki i ahau mai i Hawaiki

Ko te mauri o te tapu, he mauri no Roko, ki te whaiao

Tipua a nuku, tupua a raki

Tuturu mai kia whakamaui

Ki tina Tina! Haumi e Hui e Taiki e

From Morehu Flutey Henare, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

A waiata like Hutia te rito can be a lovely one to sing to get your weaving off to a good start.

Types of harakeke

There are two main types – the *Phormium tenax* (harakeke / swamp flax) and the *Phormium cookianum* (wharariki or mountain flax). However, Manaaki Whenua / Landcare Research have amassed a wonderful collection of 50 types with varying uses for raranga. There's pictures of each variety and notes about their colour when undyed and dyed, strength of muka, and their main raranga uses.

<https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/resources/collections/harakeke>

The wharariki and coloured varieties that you commonly find around the place work perfectly for putiputi, whetu, and if in good condition - small takakai, takainu mats (placemats and coasters) and the like. Even pop up kete and kono can be made from wharariki and coloured variants.

The tenax is needed for its length and internal fibre muka in order to make kete, peke, whāriki etc.



⇐ For instance, left hand side is mountain flax, wharariki; right hand side is tenax. The colours of the leaves are quite different. Identifying harakeke with high muka content that is easy to remove requires patience and research.



The two bushes to the right were in my ⇒ old garden. Both really great for putiputi (the brown one), and pop up kete and putiputi (the coloured variety). They had little muka content but dried lovely interesting colours.

These bushes below are tenax varieties. The left from Janet Stewart Reserve near Spencer Park which is a great place to collect from to make long kete and whāriki. The muka inside is great (see middle pic) I'm just not that skilled at getting it out intact 😊 The right hand side is a bush that's not looked after as well in a reserve on Old West Coast Rd.

