

Dacrydium cupressinum

[Synonyms : *Dacrydium cupressiforme*, *Thalamia cupressina*]

RED PINE is an evergreen tree. Native to New Zealand, Malaysia, the Pacific islands and Tasmania, it has tiny cones.

It is also known as New Zealand red pine, *Rimu* (Maori), and Rimu pine.

Cupressinum is derived from the genus name *Cupressus* meaning ‘like plants in that (cypress) genus’.

Maoris used the resinous heartwood for torches.

They sometimes ate the acorn-like *Quercus* red cups/receptacles raw. Harvesting these however was extremely dangerous and needed considerable climbing skills that were considered to be a male preserve.

The young branches have provided an ingredient for a spruce beer of not an especially palatable taste – for Europeans at least. Apparently when the famous English navigator, Captain Cook (1728-1779) was in the region, he ordered beer to be made from them as a scurvy preventative. The addition of leaves of a local ‘tea plant’ (*Leptospermum scoparium*) is said to have received general approval from his crew as they were believed to have improved the flavour although it diluted the effectiveness of any medicinal qualities.

The bark has been used for tanning. It will stain leather a slightly red colour.

At the height of its use the strong, durable reddish-brown wood, which is admired for its beautiful markings and was chosen in New Zealand for a wide range of uses from ships’ keels and bridge building to house interiors, furniture and railway sleepers. However by the teens of the 21st Century the reduction of these trees in the Country was such that the New Zealand Government was prompted to introduce a law to protect them from logging.

Medicinally, the bark has been used by the Maoris, preferably harvested on the side of the tree facing the rising sun. The gum has been used to stem bleeding, and an infusion of the leaves has been used to treat sores and ulcers.