



AKFAKF

Maori name: akeake
Common name: Dodonea
Botanical name: *Dodonea viscosa*

What does it look like?

Akeake is a small tree up to seven metres in height with pale green, long, thin and willowlike leaves, tiny flowers without petals and striking reddish-yellow seed capsules which have thin, broad wings. The trunk grows up to 16 cm diameter. Both male and female plants are needed in order to produce seeds. The form *Dodonea viscosa* 'Purpurea' is a purple coloured variety which lives on the banks of the Wairau River in Marlborough.

Where does it grow?

Akeake is common in coastal and lowland scrub and forest throughout the North Island and as far south as Greymouth and Banks Peninsula in the South Island. It grows from sea level up to 550 metres wherever severe frost is not a problem. It withstands strong winds, salt spray and dry conditions, but needs a well drained soil.

Growing tips . . . in your plant growing unit

Trim the tops of each plant in late summer/autumn as they get up to 30 cm in height to prevent 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

Akeake is very good for providing low coastal shelter. The fibrous spreading root system, rapid growth and spreading canopy make it an ideal soil stabiliser which is particularly useful in controlling gully and coastal dune erosion.

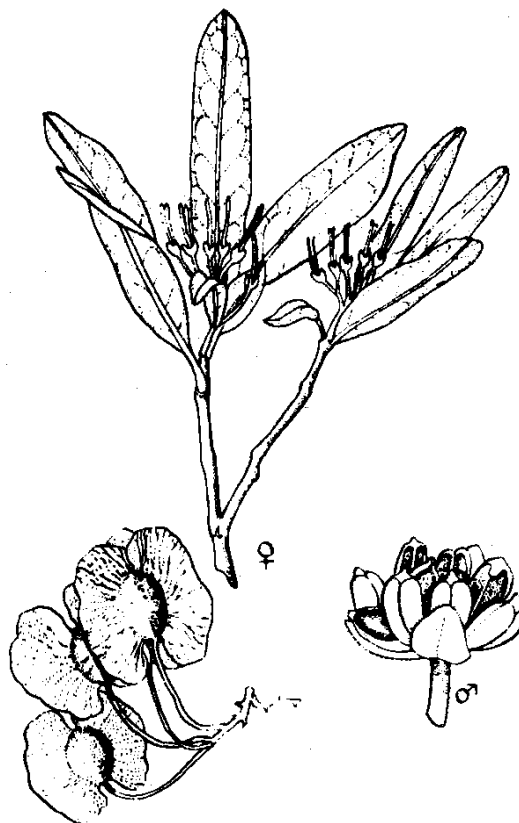
Used to ...

Akeake timber is one of the hardest native woods. Its heart wood (from the centre of the trunk) is black with streaks of white and is very dense and heavy. The wood was traditionally used for paddles, weapons, digging sticks and spade blades. The twigs can be used to make a number of dyes - pale green, yellow green, and bright gold.

Although the leaves and seed were used to make a kind of perfume, the Maori did not seem to use the tree medicinally. This is surprising, since in Indonesia, Tahiti, Panama and Peru the same tree is used for reducing fevers.

Did you know . . . ?

The name akeake means 'forever and ever' - a reference to the amazing hardness of the wood - things made from it seemed to last for ever and ever!



Picture from Lindsay Poole and Nancy Adams, 1990, *Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand*, DSIR Publishing.

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