



© WEHI CREATIVE

plants unique to  
**TAWHITINUI**  
POOR KNIGHTS ISLANDS



WEHI CREATIVE COLLECTIVE @ TUTUKAKA MARINA 2020

# TAWHITINUI

## The Poor Knights Islands

Tawhitinui/Poor Knights Islands are located 20 kms offshore midway between the Bay of Islands and Whangārei Harbour. The islands have been isolated from mainland Aotearoa/NZ for longer than any other group apart from the Three Kings Islands, 60kms northwest of Cape Reinga. What remains today are heavily eroded rims of a large volcano which erupted some 10 million years ago.

Today the group consists of two main islands, Tawhiti Rahi and Aorangi. There are also several smaller islands and rock stacks. 6.5kms to the southwest lay the Pinnacles and the Sugarloaf. Collectively these islands form Tawhitinui, or the Poor Knights Islands Marine Reserve. Rising vertically 100 meters from the sea floor the many land and underwater features of caves and archways are the result of constant erosion during fluctuating sea levels.

Tawhitinui is considered to be eroded rhyolite from the remains of large lava domes, which rose up from a deep fracture running from the Coromandel Peninsula north. The Poor Knights Islands were probably joined by dry land to the mainland for only a few thousand years during the peak lowest sea levels.

For further reading about geology of Tawhitinui:

### **Out of the Ocean into the Fire**

by **B.W. Hayward**

**History in the rocks, fossils and landforms of Auckland, Northland and Coromandel 2017**





A Botanical Guide to the Plants in the

# WAERENGA TAWHITINUI

Poor Knights Garden @Tutukaka Marina

with the generous contribution & support of Guy & Sandra Bowden and the team from

## TAWAPOU COASTAL NATIVES



Some of the images are direct links to botanical information at Tawapou Coastal Natives.

Use the mouse and have fun exploring more about the plants!

# Plants of Tawhitinui

"...From a distance as you approach the islands from the west they appear to be covered almost entirely with pōhutukawa. As you move closer you can see the caves and pitted cliffs where coastal tussock (*Chinochloa brommoides*), ice plant (*Disphyma*), harakeke, rengarenga lily, *Coprosma repens* and higher up taranga raupō (*Xeronema callistemon*) perch on outcrops.

On the eastern side of Aorangi is the only shore line of any substance. Inland is lush subtropical broadleaf forest. According to papers in the *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 1999, the number of vascular flora of the island group was at 276 species, with possibly only one plant endemic to the islands. However they also conclude that many are near endemics. Their close proximity to the coast, prevailing westerly winds and being within reach of foraging birds effectively prevents the genetic isolation of Tawhitinui flora.

It would be fair to say that the islands broadleaf plants have larger, glossier leaves than their mainland counterparts a phenomenon commonly known as "Island giantism", possibly caused by highly fertile soils continuously enriched by millions of seabirds which nest there.

The first botanist to publish an account was Cockayne in 1905. He landed briefly on Aorangi for two to three hours. Although he missed the taranga raupō, he did discover a large population of mākaka *Carmichaelia williamsii* (giant flowering broom). What he described as grasslands is now covered in thick growth up to six meters high.

Poor Knights Lily or taranga raupō is still a comparatively rare plant in cultivation. It would have to be one of New Zealand's finest horticultural plants. Taranga raupō are found growing mostly near or at the top of the islands. Sometimes growing in the forks of branches where the native parakeet hollows out nests at the base of the plants. After 8-10 years maybe you can expect some spectacular flowers.

Perhaps the most successful Tawhitinui plant in cultivation is the *Arthropodium* or rengarenga lily. The Tawhitinui rengarenga has an unusually robust habitat, larger leaves and larger than usual showy flowers..."

*Text from the [TAWAPOU](#) website*

1



**mākaka**

1. *Carmichaelia williamsii*



2



**houpara**

2. *Pseudopanax lessonii*



3



**mahoe**

3. *Melicytus novae-zealandiae*



4



**karo**

4. *Pittosporum roimata*



5



Seabird tussock

5. *Chinochloa bromoides*



6



**toetoe**

6. *Austroderia splendens*



7



**taupata**

*Coprosma repens* 'Poor Knights'



8



**pohuehue**

8. *Muehlenbeckia complexa*



9



**horokaka**

9. *Disphyma australe* subsp. *australe*



10



**ewekuri**

10. *Streblus banksii*

11



**porokaiwhiri**

11. *Hedycarya arborea*

12



Background *Macropiper psittacorum*

12. Foreground *arthropodium bifuratum*

13



**tītoki**

13. *Alectryon excelsius*

14



**wharawhara**

14. *Astelia banksii*

15



**matipou/ māpou**

15. *Myrsine aquilonia*

16



**wharangi**

16. *Melicope ternata*

17



**kawakawa**

17. *Macropiper excelsum*

18



**nau**

18. *Lepidium oleraceum*

19



**koromiko**  
19. Hebe bollonsii



20



**kaihua**  
20. Parsonsia heterophylla



21



**rengarenga**  
21. Arthropodium bifurcatum

22



**kōwhai**  
22. Sophora

23



**whau**  
23. Entelea arborescens



24



**mānuka**  
24. Leptospremum scoparium



25



**pōhutukawa**  
25. Metrosideros excelsa

26



**pūriri**  
26. Vitex lucens

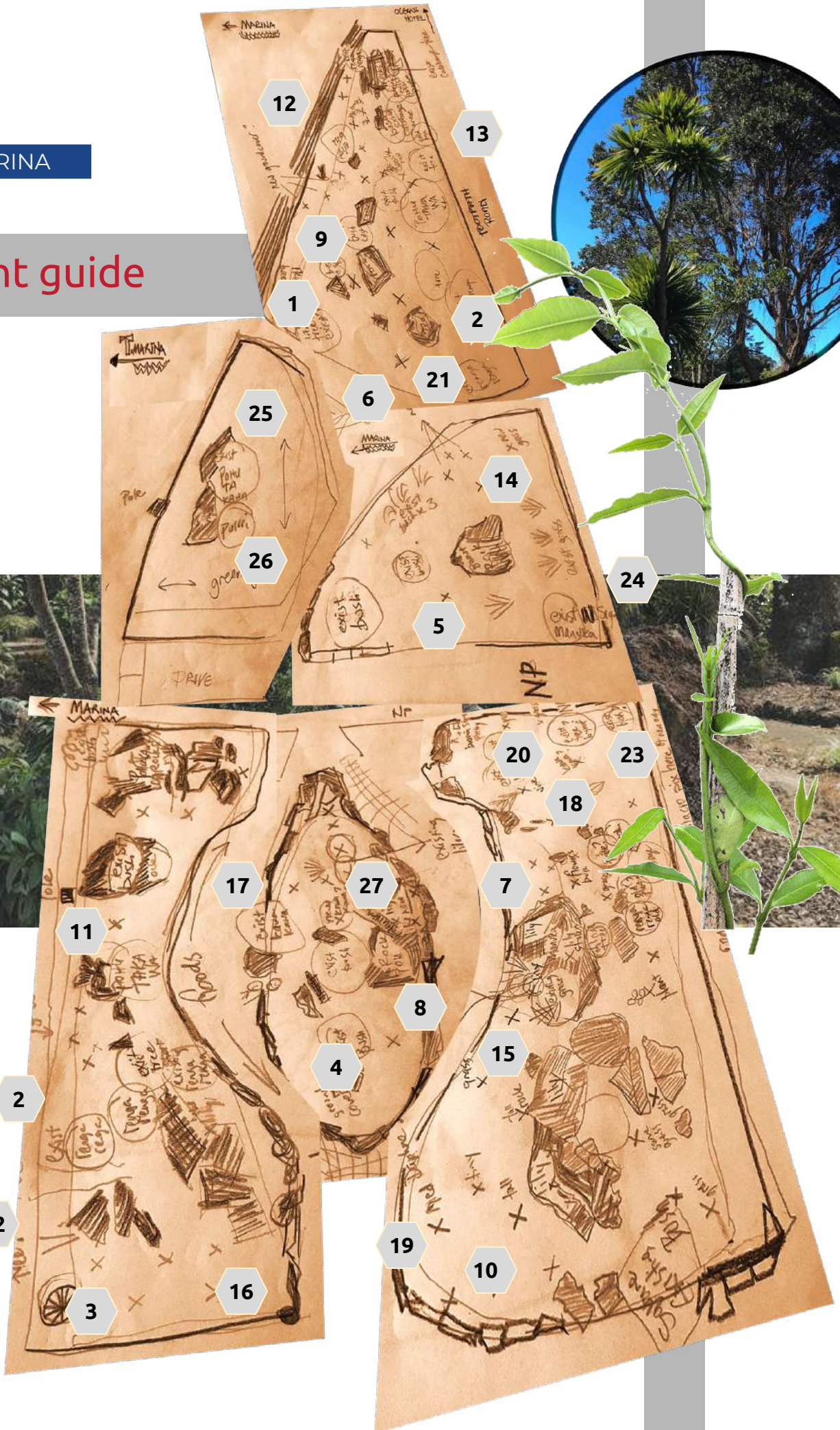
27



**taranga raupō**  
27. Xeronema callistemon



# plant guide

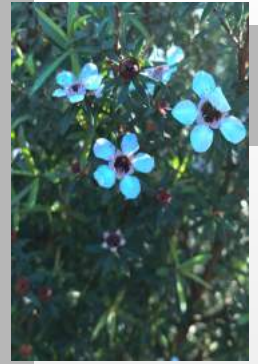




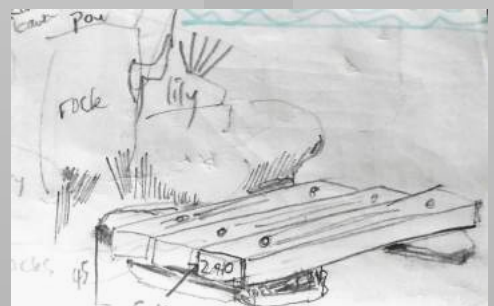
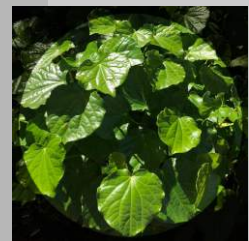
MARINA ←



MARINA



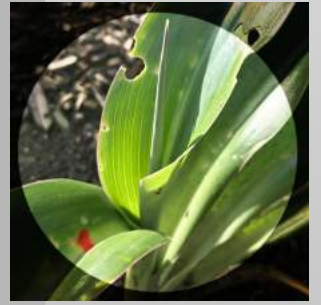
MARINA



MARINA



MARINA



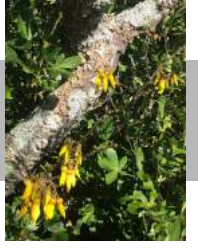
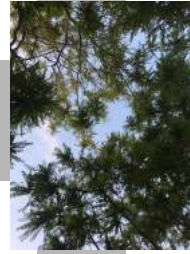


GRASSES & GROUNDCOVERS





# trees



pūiri  
pōhutukawa  
kōwhai  
tī kōuka





# He toi whakairo, He mana tangata

Piri Sciascia

Where there is artistic excellence, there is human dignity.



© WEHI CREATIVE COLLECTIVE



**'He taanga kākaho ka kitea e te kanohi,  
tēnā ko te taanga ngākau e kore e kitea.'**

A mark, or knot of a reed can be seen with the eye,  
but that of the heart can not be seen.'

## Notes & references

### TAWAPOU COASTAL NATIVES

Text about islands, plants etc on website

<https://www.tawapou.co.nz/news/the-poor-knights-islands>

Manaaki Whenua Database:

<https://maoriplantuse.landcareresearch.co.nz>

TE PAPA Collections

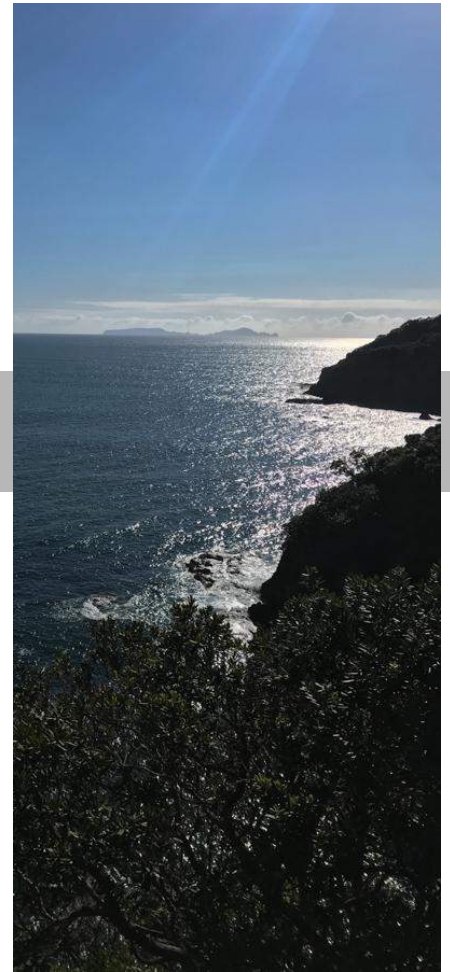
<https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/search/poor%20knights/results>

Further Reading:

Out of the Ocean into the Fire by B.W. Hayward

History in the rocks, fossils and landforms of Auckland,  
Northland and Coromandel 2017

Tutukaka Marina is the location of the Tawhitinui /Poor  
Knights Gardens



This botanical guide has been made possible  
with the kind help & support by  
Guy & Sandra Bowden and the team from

# TAWAPOU COASTAL NATIVES



# waerenga TAWHITINUI



## POOR KNIGHTS GARDEN



with gratitude & acknowledgements for support to the WEHI CREATIVE COLLECTIVE Project 2020

