



RIMU (*DACRYDIUM CUPRESSINUM*)

The Rimu (red pine) is a Podocarp, softwood tree found at low altitude throughout New Zealand, except in the drier east of the South Island. Undisturbed Podocarp forests are luxuriant, even tropical, with a dense undergrowth of shrubs, ferns, tree-ferns, lianas and epiphytes. Hardwood species such as Tawa and Kamahi form the canopy, while the tall Podocarps (such as the Rimu, Totara and Kahikatea) soar high above, and Rimu can live to be very old and reach huge dimensions (60 metres in height and 1.5 metres in diameter). Rimu was often the most dominant tree emerging above the forest canopy. Still widespread, limited milling of Rimu continues in some regions, such as the West Coast of the South Island.

The Rimu has a tall, straight trunk, covered with a grey pimpled bark of long thick flakes, and with weeping, slender branches. After extensive milling (mainly for building materials), Government controls restricted milling from 1987. The timber is relatively soft-grained and of medium weight, but stump wood is considerably heavier and denser. Dry heartwood is moderately durable, and varies from yellow to a dark reddish brown, and clear heartwood is straight-grained, dense, hardwearing, highly decorative, and machines well.



Often the most dominant tree. Photo: DOC

Rimu was used by Māori for house planks and canoes, and was easily worked with stone tools, wooden wedges and mallets. After European settlement it was used for structural purposes, as well as weatherboards and joinery. Rimu is now a highly prized furniture timber in New Zealand, valued internationally for its rich grain.



Woodturners find the texture, colour and spectacular hues of Rimu rewarding, along with its ability (with care) to take a good finish. However, sanding of end grain can be difficult and end grain areas may take up a lot of the finish coat. Most prized is highly figured Rimu wood, found especially in burrs. Rimu is well suited to domestic ware, bowls, platters, and artistic hollow forms.

Possible health risks: Rimu dust tends to be irritating to the eyes and nose.
Density 595 kg/m³

