



Kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*)

Kanuka is a member of the *Myrtaceae* (myrtle) family found throughout tropical and South America across to China and down through the Pacific. Kanuka is found throughout the North Island of New Zealand and in the South Island down to the Clutha River, from lowland to montane shrub-lands and forests, but it tends to be found on the drier and more fertile soils.

Kanuka and Manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) are seen by many as very similar plants and are lumped together under the common name of Tea Tree. They each, however, belong to a different botanical genus and share few common features.

Kanuka can grow to 20 metres or more in height, with a trunk 60cm or more in diameter. Kanuka has small creamy white flowers up to 5mm diameter, tending to be in dense clusters towards the end of the branches, in mid-summer. The seed capsules are less than 3mm dia and remain on the tree for only a month or two. The leaves are small, narrow, and notably soft to touch.

Neither the honey collected from Kanuka, or its leaves, are known to have any medicinal properties.

Kanuka wood is tough, being used by Māori for implements such as fernroot beaters, mauls, paddles, weapons, spade blades, weeders, digging sticks and bird spears. The timber was noted for its straight grain, durability and strength by early European settlers, and was in demand for wheel-spokes, tool handles and other such purposes. Kanuka and Manuka wood is commonly used as firewood, especially for barbeques, or charred into charcoal.

The wood has a fine texture and cuts nicely to show dark brown to red-brown heartwood with a tight interesting grain that takes a good finish.

Possible health risks: none known
Density 757 kg/m³

