

# Kauri

## *Agathus australis*

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There are around 20 species of *Agathus* found mostly in the Western Pacific. *Australis* is the most southern.

‘Kauri’ means ‘tree’ in Māori.

By Tim Allsop 14<sup>th</sup> December 2024



## Tane mahuta

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- Estimated 2,000 years old
  - 50 metres tall
  - >4 metres in diameter
  - 244 m<sup>3</sup> of timber
- Waipoua forest in northland





## Kauri forests

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These covered large areas of the country north of Tauranga prior to colonisation. Concentrated in Northland and Coromandel.

About 1 million hectares initially now less than 1% remains. There is extensive regrowth





## Young kauri tree

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In their early stages young kauri have a typical conifer shape but as they grow taller they shed the lower branches so the trunks are knot-free. These were logged for ship's spars.

Mature kauri have massive columnar trunks with huge root structures.





## **Kauri gum**

Fossilised resin

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Used by Māori as fire lighters and chewing gum.

Gum digging industry developed for gum to be exported for use in varnishes and linoleum.





## Cones

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Trees have male and female cones.  
Fertilised seeds are wind distributed





## Uses of kauri timber

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Main attribute was long lengths of clean timber so an early use was for boat building and making masts and spars of ships.

Later used for house building and furniture making. Large quantities were exported throughout the world

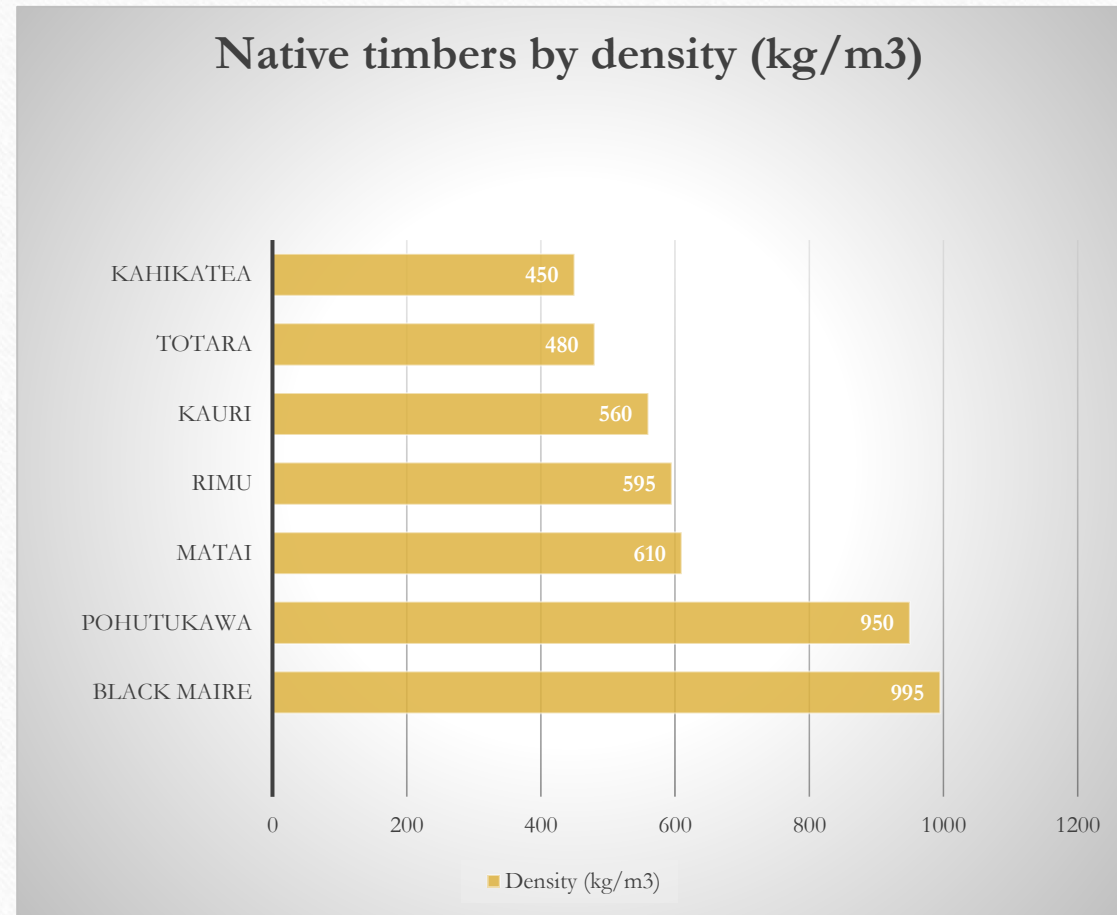


## Physical properties

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Kauri:

“no other sawn timber has such outstanding excellence in so many fields of use.”





# Kauri dieback disease

Caused by soil organism *Phytophthora agathicida*







## Swamp kauri

Trees recovered from kauri swamps may be 50,000 years old. The timber has become coloured through immersion and is now very valuable.

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## Swamp kauri bowl

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# Kauri wig stands

Made from Fijian Kauri  
donated to Graeme  
MacIntyre







# Kauri potpourri bowl

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Characteristic speckle in the  
grain called 'whitebait'



## Sources

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The Native Trees of New Zealand, J T Salmon, 1996

Ancient Trees- Trees that live for a thousand years, E Parker and A  
Lewington, 2012

Woodturning in New Zealand, Brian Massey, 1987