



# GuideLines

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## Tēnā koutou katoa

(Greetings, hello to you all)

### Flora News

By Warren Brewer

Tiritiri Matangi's nikau grove.

One of the highlights of the Wattle Valley Walk is seeing the nikau grove, planted during 1994.

Nikau, *Rhopalostylis sapida*, is regarded as the world's southernmost palm. The large palm family, *Arecaceae*, is mostly found in tropical and subtropical climates. Nikau is one of the few temperate climate outliers.



Tiritiri Matangi's palms first flowered during 2010 and there is now a steady display of flowers and ripening fruit for visitors to enjoy. Nikau flowers are carried on compact, much branched inflorescences. Separate male and female flowers are grouped into threes, a central female with two larger lateral males. The male flowers, with six stamens, open first.



They soon disappear and female flowers open.

*Picture to left shows flowering with male flowers opening and a visiting fly.*

*Below is a close-up of male flowers with stamens.*



Pollination is mostly done by small insects. A few small birds (hihi on Tiritiri Matangi) also seek the nectar amongst the sprays, collecting pollen on their feathers.

New fruit which forms is green at first then ripens to a bright red to orange-red. Each fruit contains one seed. Kererū and kōkako are keen harvesters.

Nikau leaves were used by Maori for thatch, mats, baskets and wrapping food. Immature inflorescences and the young growing tip are edible when cooked.

*To left is a mix of new flowers, green and ripe fruit*



The species name *sapida* means savoury, pleasant to taste.

*Rhopalostylis* means club shaped style.

*Below is a close up of fruit beginning to ripen.*

