



GuideLines

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Tēnā koutou katoa

(Greetings, hello to you all)

Flora News

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Three special hard ferns to look out for on Tiritiri Matangi

Ferns belonging in the family Blechnaceae are loosely called hard ferns. This family has the majority of its species in the Southern Hemisphere with two main centres of diversity. One centre is in Central and South America and the other in Australasia and parts of the Pacific.

Many of the species have dimorphic fronds (two types).

In 2017 an extensive revision of *Blechnum*, a large genus in the family, resulted in lots of new genera and species being created. *Blechnum* is Greek for a fern.

Three special hard fern species are present on the Kawerau Track.

Rereti, lance fern, *Austroblechnum lanceolatum*, is abundant along Kawerau Track, growing amongst the forest of kohekohe trees. This fern has two frond types. Sterile fronds form the main structure (rosette shaped) with fertile spore bearing fronds emerging from the centre.

Rereti is native to New Zealand, also being found in Australia and parts of the Pacific.

Māori cooked the young outer fronds to be eaten as greens.

Austro means southern.



Left: Rereti clusters, Kawerau Track Right: Rereti rosette of sterile fronds with central brown fertile fronds

Kiokio, palm leaf fern, *Parablechnum novae-zelandiae*, is endemic to New Zealand. Kiokio also has dimorphic fronds with fertile “shrivelled looking” fronds emerging from the centre of each plant. Kiokio can also be seen on Wattle Track, growing beside the nikau palm sign. Māori wrapped vegetable foods in kiokio fronds to add flavour when hangi cooking. The fern’s young fronds (fiddle heads) were also cooked as a vegetable. Para means “close to, almost.” Kiokio has fairly large sterile fronds, hence the common name palm leaf fern.



Kiokio with central fertile fronds

Pānako, thread fern, *Icarus filiformis*, is a climbing fern, tallest in the family. *Icarus* is a new genus with just a single species. It is the only family member with trimorphic fronds (three types). Beginning its growth in contact with the soil it has juvenile sterile fronds with small rounded leaves. As it starts to climb larger mature sterile fronds are formed. Wispy, thread like fertile fronds form the third type.



Pānako climbing with juvenile and mature sterile fronds

Filiformis means thread like.

Pānako, thread fern, is a unique New Zealand botanical gem, easily seen along the Kawerau Track climbing tree trunks.



Left: Pānako juvenile sterile fronds Right: Pānako thread like fertile fronds with mature sterile fronds

Icarus is featured in Greek mythology, escaping from Crete with his father by flying with wings sealed together with beeswax. Icarus sadly flew too close to the sun.