

SUPPORTERS of



TIRITIRI MATANGI
incorporated

GuideLines

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Tēnā koutou katoa

(Greetings, hello to you all)



Flora News

By Warren Brewer

Taurepo, a former Tiritiri Matangi plant treasure, has made a welcome return.



Taurepo flower and seed capsule

A healthy seedling of taurepo (*Rhabdothamnus solandri*) has been found growing alongside the Wattle Track (*left below*). There are actually two seedlings, both with labels, a smaller one is close to the track edge (*right below*). To view them go 30 paces past the first water trough and look on the left side of the track.



Taurepo was planted in several sites on Tiritiri Matangi, using seeds sourced from Little Barrier Island. Taurepo is naturally restricted to the North Island and some of its nearby offshore islands. It forms a bushy shrub up to 2m tall with twiggy branches and distinctive tooth edged leaves. The leaves are harshly hairy to touch (sandpaper-like).



Old taurepo sign

Taurepo can bear a few flowers most of the year but has peak flowering from October to March. The pretty tubular flowers (*see header pic*) are coloured from bright orange red to orange yellow with reddish stripes on the petals.

Taurepo relies on visits from the honey eaters, tūī, korimako and hihi, for pollination. Fortunately all three are present on Tiritiri Matangi. On the mainland korimako are absent from the upper third of North Island and hihi were only present on Little Barrier Island. Tūī now tend to visit flowers higher up in the canopy, choosing many exotic trees. Silvereyes (tauhou) also visit but have to stab the base of the flower to rob nectar, avoiding pollination. Ovoid shaped brown capsules with numerous small seeds form after flowering.



Taurepo seed capsules

Rhabdothamnus is an endemic genus with just a single species (monotypic). It belongs in the gesneriads/African violet family, Gesneriaceae. The only NZ member, Tawāpou is sometimes called NZ gloxinia.

Gloxinia is a small genus mostly found in South America, also belonging in the African violet family.

Tawāpou's closest relative is the pumpkin tree (*Negria rhabdothamnoides*) which is found on Lord Howe Island, situated in the Tasman sea. *Negria* is also a monotypic genus.

Rhabdothamnus means "twiggy shrub."