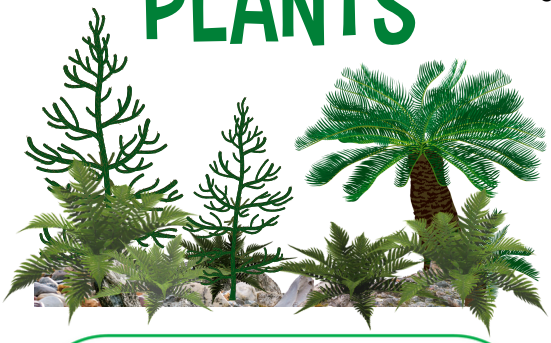
PREHISTORIC PLANTS



Did you know?

New Zealand has some of the oldest primeval forests in the world.

Many plants found here are very similar to those that grew during the time of the dinosaurs and some evolved even earlier!

Ferns

The first ferns evolved around 360 million years ago. They were once the main type of vegetation covering the Earth. Use the attached guide from Te Papa to help identify your local tree ferns.

Mosses

Mosses evolved at least 400 million years ago, long before the dinosaurs, and they haven't changed much since.

The tallest type of moss in the world *Dawsonia superba* grows in New Zealand!

Monkey Puzzle Trees

These spikey conifers evolved when dinosaurs roamed Gondwana in the Jurassic period 160 million years ago.

They were a favourite food for large sauropods like Diplodocus.

Kauri

Kauri are amongst the world's tallest trees and are very similar to the types of conifers growing during the Jurassic period. Sauropods would have used their long necks to eat thier leaves and cones.

Podocarp Trees

Podocarps are a type of conifer. The best known are kahikatea miro, mataī, rimu and tōtara. Their ancestors evolved about 200 million years ago. Many have spiky leaves and small, fleshy fruits.

Cycads

Cycads look a bit like palm trees. Modern species are very similar to the types common during the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods.

Their leaves and cones were eaten by herbivorous dinosaurs.

Ginkgo

Fossil ginkgo leaves have been dated to 200 million years old. Ginkgo trees are easily recognised in autumn when their leaves change from green to golden yellow.

Proteas

Protea belong to an ancient family of flowering plants. They appeared 100 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. Their seeds evolved to survive wildfires and were probably spread in herbivorous dinosaur poop.

Magnolias

Magnolias also evolved during the Cretaceous period and would have been eaten by medium-sized herbivorous dinosaurs like Triceratops. Bees did not yet exist and so their giant flowers were pollinated by beetles.

We'd love to see photos of your prehistoric plant investigations.
You can e-mail us here.

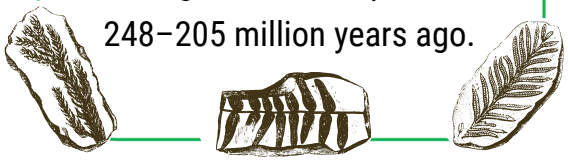
BUTTERFLY creek™

NATIVE TREE HUNT

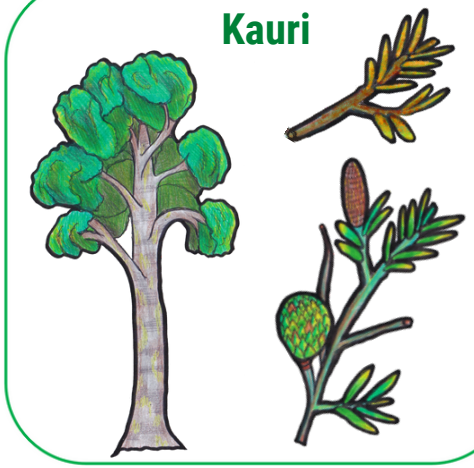
Go on a hunt for native trees that are very similar to those that would have been eaten by prehistoric plant-eating dinosaurs.

Did you know?

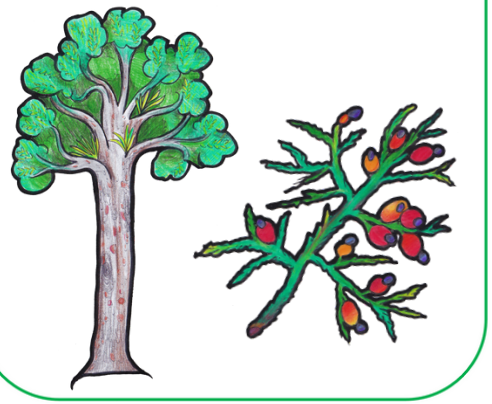
Fossilised wood, leaves and seeds have been found showing that ancient forms of kauri, rimu, tōtara and kahikatea trees were growing during the Triassic period, 248–205 million years ago.



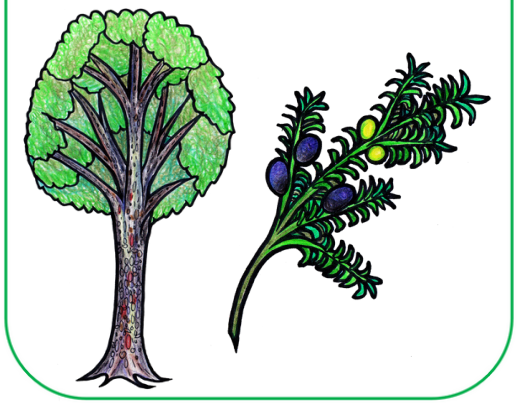
Kauri



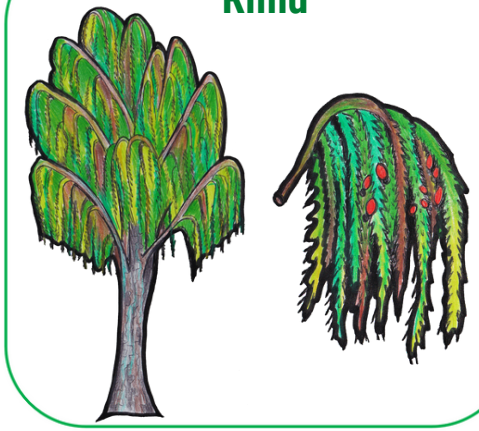
Kahikatea



Mataī

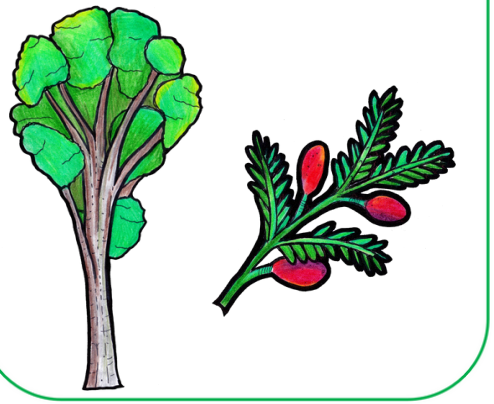


Rimu



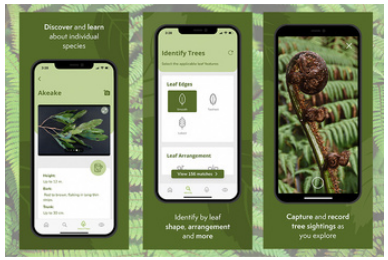
Tōtara

Miro



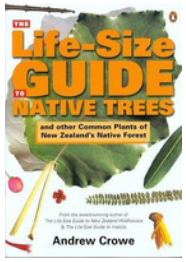
NZ Tree App

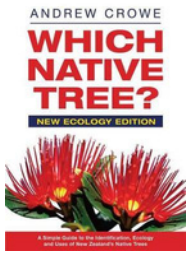
Download this online app to help you identify over 200 native plants.



Useful Guide Books

Andrew Crowe's guidebooks are great to use with children.





Clipart and Fact Files

You can purchase a set of native tree clipart and fact files from greengrubsgardenclub.com.

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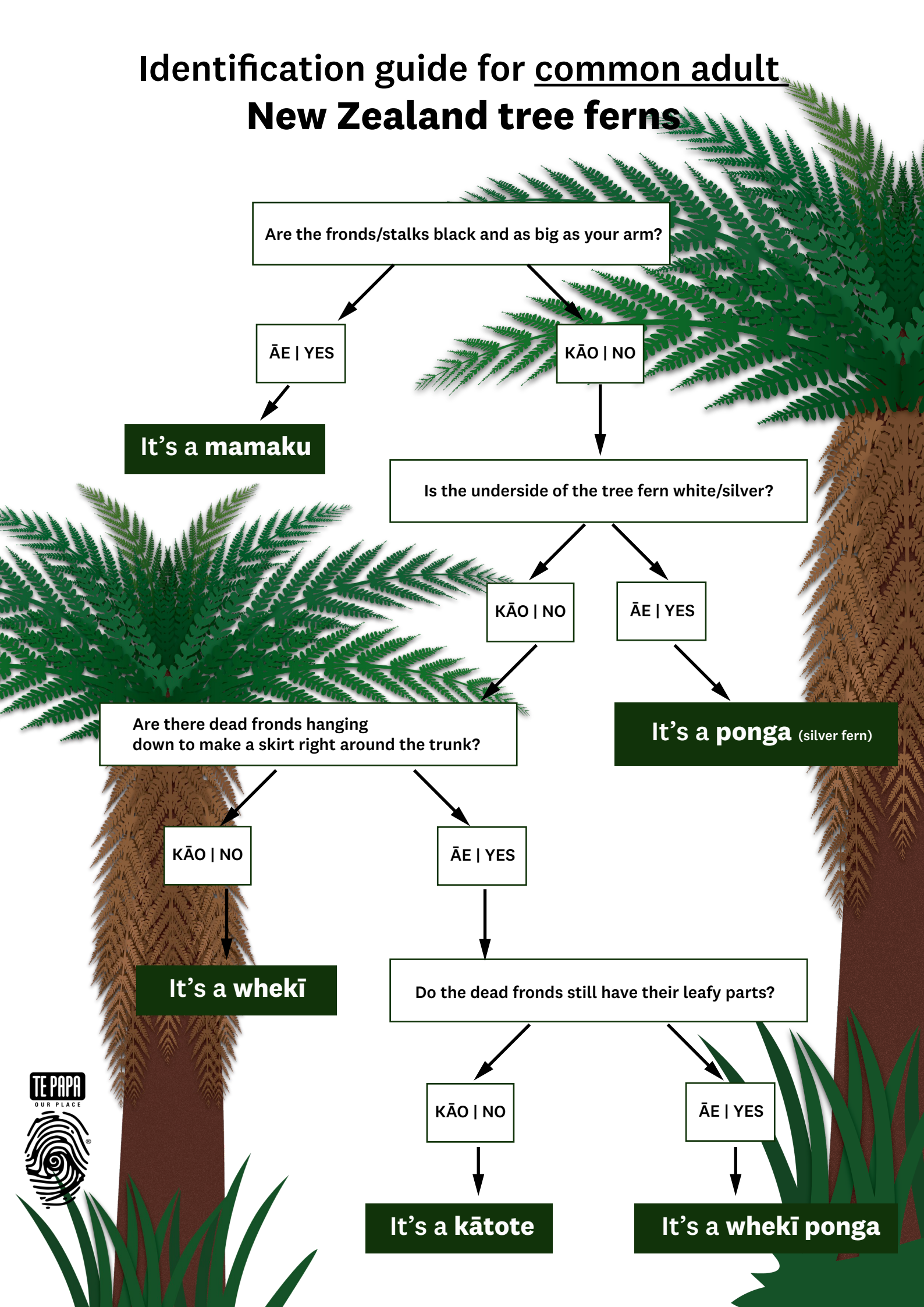
Identification guide for common adult New Zealand tree ferns



Are the fronds/stalks black and as big as your arm?

ĀE | YES

It's a **mamaku**

KĀO | NO

Is the underside of the tree fern white/silver?

KĀO | NO

Are there dead fronds hanging down to make a skirt right around the trunk?

KĀO | NO

It's a **whekī**

ĀE | YES

Do the dead fronds still have their leafy parts?

KĀO | NO

It's a **kātote**

ĀE | YES

It's a **whekī ponga**

ĀE | YES

It's a **ponga** (silver fern)