

Kōwhai

(*Sophora microphylla*)



Kōwhai is distinguished by its beautiful tubular hanging yellow flowers which give it its namesake and contain large amounts of nectar.

Flowering from late winter through spring attracting nectar loving birds which act as pollinators, the unusual pods form after flowering and can remain on the tree for a long time.

The Kōwhai leaves consist of 20-40 lateral leaflets. They are semi-deciduous so sometimes you may see them without their leaves.

The seeds are globe trotters thanks to their thick waxy coating and have been found in the Kermadec Islands and Chile. Although these seeds do not grow there it does go to show their distribution here is aided by rivers and ocean currents.

Size

Up to 25m tall

Distribution & Habitat

Kōwhai is found throughout New Zealand. It prefers lowland floodplains and river sides but because of its beauty you will see it planted in urban areas. They do well in semi-shaded sites with well-draining soil.

Species it attracts

Kererū love the leaves and flowers of the Kōwhai tree. Darting amongst them you will find Tūi who aggressively defend certain trees. Nectar will also bring in Korimako (Bellbird) and Tauhou (Silvereye).

Where to plant in your garden

Kōwhai grow in a range of conditions, in many types of soil and are relatively easy to care for. Many species can grow very large so for smaller gardens, it's best to check if you can get the dwarf variety. Kōwhai also drop a lot of leaf litter so may not be perfect for those who like a manicured garden.



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