

NEW ZEALAND TREES

The RIMU

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THE NATIVE pines of New Zealand do not belong to the same family as the true pines whose fruit is a woody cone and leaves are needle-like. Some, such as the kauri and kawaka, do have woody cones, but the leaves are flat; but the fruits of the remainder are nuts seated in fleshy cups. The best-known kinds are the rimu, miro, matai, tanekaha, kahikatea, and totara. Of these, the rimu is the most abundant and, judging by production, is the chief timber tree of New Zealand. Its tall, mast-like stem gives character to high forest. Its yellowish drooping foliage is conspicuous when the forest is seen from a distance.

The rimu was discovered by Captain Cook, who called it spruce fir. He was looking for leaves from which he could brew beer, and experimented with the rimu. The resultant concoction was used to take the place of vegetables, but proved too astringent. To counteract this an equal quantity of manuka leaves was mixed with the rimu and the beer brewed from this was said to be quite palatable and esteemed by all.

The name red-pine, commonly applied to the rimu, is derived from the colour of the wood. Actually, the timber varies from light yellow to deep red. The heart wood is durable, but it is not clearly marked off from the sap, which decays completely in exposed situations. Rimu is extensively used for furniture and house building. Some pieces are handsomely variegated and hence are especially suitable for doors, furniture, and panelling.

