

Ecosourcing

Information sheet for QEII National Trust covenantors

Our native plants have adapted over a long time to cope with the many different conditions found in New Zealand (temperature, rainfall, soil condition, fertility, acidity, salinity, seasonal changes, slope, windiness, altitude, and so on). Many plants rely on the presence of special types of root fungi, other plants, insects, and birds in order to thrive and spread.

Our native plants also play a crucial role in the life-cycle of other species that have adapted alongside them and that rely on them for food, shelter, and breeding places.

What is ecosourcing?

Ecosourcing involves propagating seeds of wild native plants from local areas and then planting them back within the same area.

Why use ecosourced plants in covenants?

- The National Trust has a long-standing policy of only approving ecosourced plants for restoration projects in covenants.
- Covenants protect native plants that reflect the original vegetation and plant communities in a particular location. By using ecosourced species in restoration plantings, covenantors maintain the unique characteristics of their covenant.
- The appearance, physiology, and the presence of certain genes varies considerably for many New Zealand plant species. Using ecosourced plants for restoration projects helps protect the diversity of our native plant species.
- Closely related plant varieties or species introduced from outside a local area can hybridise with local plants. If this happens on a large scale the local gene pool can be swamped, resulting in the loss of important local genes and plant characteristics.
- Ecosourcing respects natural plant distributions. Sometimes native plants that aren't sourced locally can become invasive (eg, karo from Northland has become invasive in more southern regions).
- Local plants are adapted to local environmental conditions such as soil type and temperature range. Using plants that occur naturally in your area can increase establishment success.
- Using ecosourced plants means plantings to restore natural vegetation are as natural as they can be.

Where to go for help



It can be difficult to know whether or not a plant has been ecosourced. Ask your local QEII representative or other conservation experts for advice on how to ecosource plants.

Some native plant nurseries grow plants that have been ecosourced for local use. The internet provides a lot of information on ecosourcing and the location of nurseries that can supply you with ecosourced plants.

Photo: Dale Farm manager, Ian Matthews, and local QEII regional representative, Mark Sutton, at a restoration planting day in Southland. Photo: Courtesy of Million Metres Stream project.



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Case study

Planting high UMF (unique mānuka factor) mānuka for honey production

High UMF mānuka varieties are being sourced and planted at a number of locations around the country to support honey production. These particular varieties have been bred from plants sourced from only a few areas in New Zealand (Northland, Coromandel, and the Waikato, for example).

More than one species?

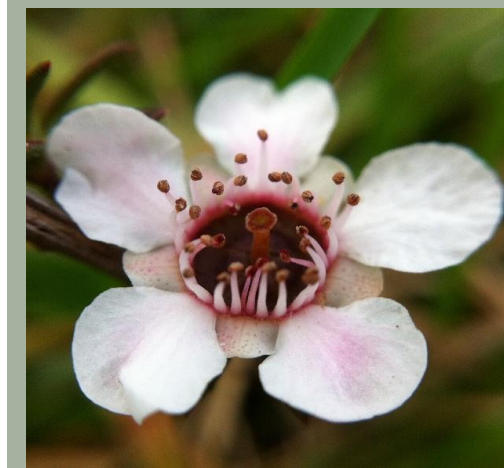
Mānuka is common throughout New Zealand in lowland and low alpine regions and is found growing in many different habitats. Despite looking similar, recent research suggests that there could be quite a number of distinct species of mānuka, each adapted to different conditions.

For this reason we have adopted a precautionary approach regarding high UMF mānuka plantings in covenants for honey production. We will not approve the introduction of mānuka from outside its ecological district.

We will review this position after more taxonomic and ecological research has been done to understand the species and we know whether or not high UMF plantations are likely to impact on genetic diversity and ecosystem health generally.

Applications to plant high UMF mānuka in covenants for honey production

The National Trust will consider applications to plant ecosourced high UMF mānuka for honey production on a case-by-case basis. Approval to plant will be based on best practice guidelines for restoration plantings, and whether the purposes, objectives, and values of the covenant will be compromised.



Leptospermum scoparium, commonly called mānuka, kāhikatoa, mānuka myrtle, or New Zealand tea tree, is a species of flowering plant in the myrtle family *Myrtaceae*.

Recent research suggests that there could be quite a number of distinct species of mānuka in New Zealand.

Photo: Tom Barber

