

Matariki

Harakeke Guidelines

Phormium tenax (harakeke) is the flax mainly used for making baskets, mats, head bands, food baskets, cloaks and tāniko – finger weaving.

Phormium cookianum (wharariki) is largely ignored but it used for plaiting mats and baskets.

Say a Karakia before you cut the flax. (optional)

Don't cut flax in the rain or at night.

Don't cut flax while mate wahine (menstruating)

Do not eat while working with the flax.

Children and women do not step over flax or unfinished flax work.

Dispose of flax back to the earth/compost, this is where it has come from, do not burn it.

One something is started it must be finished no matter what it looks like.

It is usual for the first article to be given away or buried.

Cut flax using the following instructions.

Cutting

When a suitable plant has been selected, the leaves are harvested. The central shoot, called the rito (1 in fig. viii), and the leaves on either side of it (2 in fig. viii) should not normally be cut as doing so weakens the plant considerably and also these leaves tend to shrink more than more mature ones as they dry.

The next leaves (3 in fig. viii) outside the three central ones are used for plaiting. From two to six will generally be taken from

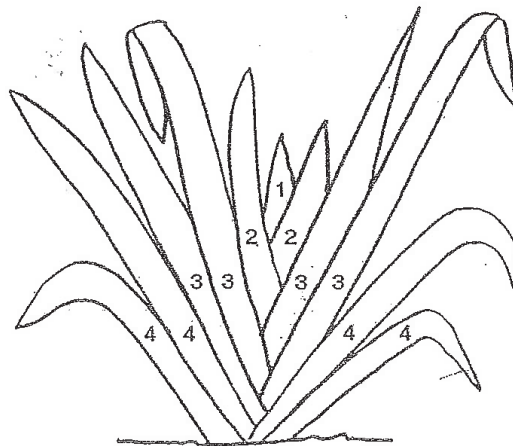


FIGURE viii

each fan of leaves. They are cut with a downward motion with a sharp knife, as near as possible to where they join the fan.

The older tattered leaves (4 in fig. viii) should also be cut to encourage new growth and to make the next cutting easier.