

When fully grown, the kauri tree has a massive columnar trunk topped by branches that spread like umbrella spokes, supporting a crown of leaves.

Joanna Orwin, 'Kauri forest - How and where kauri grows', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/photograph/10018/the-kauri-tree (accessed 15 August 2021)



Greyish-brown kauri bark has a hammer-mark texture. A mature tree continuously sheds its outer bark in large scales to prevent climbing or perching plants from gaining a permanent hold. Kauri gum is oozing from the horizontal cracks in this bark – it is the tree’s way of sealing damaged surfaces.

Joanna Orwin, 'Kauri forest - How and where kauri grows', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/photograph/10019/bark-and-gum (accessed 15 August 2021)



Kauri leaves are flat, oblong and leathery. Bronze when young, they turn bright green as the tree matures.



A kauri tree takes on different forms as it grows and matures. This diagram shows three of the most important stages, from adolescent to mature tree.

While young (left), the kauri has a typical conifer form with a tapering trunk, spiralling whorls of short branches, and a narrow, triangular crown.

Between 30 and 50 years, the tree begins to shed its lower branches (centre). At this stage it is called a ‘ricker’, after its use in the 19th century for naval masts and spars.

Once the tree has emerged above the canopy of the forest in its mature stage, the girth of its trunk increases and its top branches support a spreading crown of leaves (right).

Joanna Orwin, 'Kauri forest - How and where kauri grows', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/photograph/10018/the-kauri-tree (accessed 15 August 2021)

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Kauri’s final size depends on site and conditions, but heights average 30–40 metres and trunks can reach several metres in diameter. By 600–700 years of age, kauri reaches an average diameter of over 1 metre.

Now kauri are facing a new threat. Kauri dieback is a fungus-type disease, Phytophthora agathidicida (PA), which is having a devastating effect on New Zealand’s kauri forests in Northland, Great Barrier Island and, potentially, the Coromandel Peninsula.

There is no known cure for kauri dieback, but we can help reduce its spread by cleaning boots and equipment and avoiding kauri tree roots. Any movement of soil around the roots of trees could spread the disease.

Joanna Orwin, 'Kauri forest - How and where kauri grows', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/kauri-forest/page-1 (accessed 12 September 2021)