

Don't overlook me!

Growing in mid-air

By **Ruben Lindroth-Trimble**

Look above you when you're out in nature. Epiphytes are amazing plants that grow on other plants, like trees, without taking nutrients from them. Instead, they get their nutrients from the air, rain, and fallen leaves that collect around them.

USE YOUR eyes



Ngāvara wehi | Leather leaf fern



Kahakaha | Perching lily



Peka-a-waka | Bamboo orchid



Juvenile kōwaowao | hound's tooth fern



Makawe | Hanging spleenwort

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I've taken pictures of five common NZ epiphyte species. Can you find them all?

Search in our native forests, in parks, or even in your backyard!

Not many people know about epiphytes, but they are essential for the environment. They:

- are homes and food for native insects, birds, and bats
- help regulate (control) humidity and temperature where they grow
- are part of the biodiversity (variety of species) that keep ecosystems healthy.



USE YOUR hands



Ecosourcing seeds

Are you doing a restoration project or wanting to start one? Get ecosourcing!

What is ecosourcing?

Ecosourcing is when you collect seeds from existing native habitats. You use them to propagate (grow) more of the plants living there, then you plant the new plants back within that habitat.

Why should we do it?

1 For success

Those plants you're collecting seeds from can handle the local conditions (like how windy it is or how hot it gets or the plant diseases going round). The plants you grow from their seeds (their offspring) will likely grow better than new plants brought in from somewhere else.

2 For biodiversity

When we don't ecosource, unique plant species can end up getting mixed together genetically, becoming hybrids. Kānuka is a good example. There are eight different varieties, and they never grew together until humans planted them together. Now scientists are worried that the uniqueness of each type could be lost.

Find out how to get started at bit.ly/ecosourcing.

FACT: Epiphytes don't cope well when the environment is changing rapidly, like now with climate change. We need to be looking out for them so we can care for them.