PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Phormium tenax* J. R. Forst. & G. Forst.

**GENUS** *Phormium* **FAMILY** Asphodelaceae

**COMMON NAMES** New Zealand Flax, Harakeke

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** Flowers, flower - nectar

The pieces are cooked for 3 hours or in a pressure cooker for 1 hour. The liquid is then strained and a spoonful taken three times each day for arthritis.
The sweet nectar can be sucked out of the flowers. The gum from the base of the leaves is edible.
The juice from the waste after fibre extraction can be used to make alcohol. Caution: Alcohol is a cause of cancer.

## DESCRIPTION

A shrub which keeps growing from year to year. It grows to 1.8-3.7 m tall and 1.2-1.8 m wide. The leaves are stiff and sword like and in a clump. They are grey-green. They have a leathery texture. The flower stems are woody and purple. They rise well above the leaves. They can be 3-3.5 m long. They flowers are dull red inside brackets. These are 5 cm long. The fruit are black, curved seed pods.

## HABITAT

It is a warm temperate plant. It can tolerate light frosts. It grows in swampy places. It suits hardiness zones 8-10. Tasmania Herbarium. Hobart Botanical Gardens. Kyneton Botanical Gardens.

## PRODUCTION

### Cultivation

It is grown from seed or by division.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

It is quick growing. It will grow in most soils. The plant is dug up and 15-17 cm of the fleshy base is washed, cut into 3 cm pieces.

## NOTES

There are 2 Phormium species. They are both from New Zealand. Also put in the family Hemerocallidaceae.

## PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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