

How to Propagate *Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*



Unlocking the Secrets of Kahikatea Propagation: From Seed to Majestic Giant

The Kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*), also known as the white pine, stands as a testament to nature's grandeur. This majestic conifer, endemic to New Zealand, can reach towering heights of 60 meters, dominating the forest canopy. If you're captivated by the allure of this ancient species and dream of nurturing one in your own space, understanding the art of Kahikatea propagation is key.

While witnessing a mature Kahikatea is a spectacle in itself, the journey from tiny seed to towering giant is equally fascinating. Let's delve into the methods of propagating this magnificent tree:

1. Seed Propagation: A Journey of Patience and Reward

Propagating Kahikatea from seed mimics their natural lifecycle and is the most common method. However, patience is a virtue in this endeavor, as the process demands time and dedication.

Here's a step-by-step guide:

- **Seed Collection and Preparation:** Collect mature, purplish-black berries directly from the tree during late summer or early autumn. Extract the seeds from the fleshy fruit and soak them in water for 24 hours to remove any germination inhibitors.
- **Sowing the Seeds:** Use a well-draining seed raising mix and sow the seeds about 1cm deep in trays or pots. Mist them gently and maintain a consistently moist environment.
- **Providing the Right Conditions:** Place the seed trays in a warm, sheltered location with indirect sunlight. Germination typically occurs within 3 to 6 months, but it can sometimes take longer.
- **Transplanting the Seedlings:** Once the seedlings have developed a strong root system and several sets of true leaves, they can be carefully transplanted into individual pots or directly into the ground. Choose a location with ample space for the tree to mature.

2. Cutting Propagation: A Quicker Route with Specific Requirements

While more commonly used for smaller plants, cuttings can be employed for Kahikatea propagation, offering a faster route to a mature tree. However, success rates can be lower than with seeds:

- **Taking Cuttings:** During late spring or early summer, select healthy, non-flowering shoots from a mature Kahikatea. Cut a section approximately 10-15cm long, making a clean cut just below a node.
- **Preparing the Cuttings:** Remove the lower leaves from the cutting, leaving only a few at the top. Dip the cut end in a rooting hormone powder to encourage root development.
- **Planting and Care:** Plant the cuttings in a well-draining

potting mix, burying the bottom node. Keep the soil consistently moist and place the pots in a warm, humid environment, preferably with bottom heat.

- **Transplanting:** Once roots are established and new growth emerges, the cuttings can be transplanted into larger pots or directly into the ground.

Cultivating Success: Essential Tips for Thriving Kahikatea

- **Well-Drained Soil:** Regardless of the propagation method, ensure the soil is well-drained to avoid waterlogging, which can lead to root rot.
- **Sunlight Requirements:** Plant young Kahikatea in an area that receives a mix of sun and shade. As they mature, they thrive in full sun conditions.
- **Watering Needs:** While tolerant of some drought, consistent watering is crucial, especially during the first few years after planting. Aim to keep the soil moist but not waterlogged.
- **Patience is Key:** Remember, Kahikatea are slow-growing trees. Don't be disheartened if you don't see rapid progress. With patience and proper care, you'll be rewarded with a majestic specimen that will grace your landscape for generations to come.

Propagating a Kahikatea, whether from seed or cutting, is a long-term commitment. It's a testament to patience, dedication, and a deep appreciation for the wonders of nature. By understanding the nuances of each technique and providing the optimal growing conditions, you can embark on the fulfilling journey of nurturing these magnificent giants, leaving a lasting legacy for future generations.