

processed by Granulated Bark Supplies in Kumeu, Auckland. It is granulated by a hammer milling process and has not been composted or stored for any periods prior to being used in the potting mixes. The pH of the bark as it is delivered to us is 4.2 compared to Hauraki peat 3.75, and Kiwi peat 4.5. The bark and pumice is mixed in a paddle mixer and, during the mixing process, fertilizers are added. Water is also mixed in at this point, the bark being easier to wet while still being mixed.

PROPAGATION OF KOWHAI (*SOPHORA MICROPHYLLA*)

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The reasons and methods of propagating *Sophora microphylla* 'Fulvida' from seed are discussed in this article.

The main use of this plant for me is as bonsai material. The growth appears naturally stunted and the leaf structure is very fine. It is endemic to the west coast of the Auckland district where it grows in great abundance. This plant does not grow through the normal juvenile stages and will flower after six years from seed planting. The flowers appear in mid-spring and the seed is ready to harvest in late summer. This kowhai has also proved to be very resistant to drought conditions.

Seed Germination. The secret of my quick and even germination of seed is the time of seed collection. The seed must not be allowed to harden at all, but at the same time must be allowed to develop fully. This is difficult to convey, but my simple test seems to be successful. I collect the seed at a time when I can, but with some difficulty, cleanly cut a seed in half with my thumb nail. If the seed squashes it is too soon; if the seed seems soft but you cannot quite cut it, you can still collect it but it will need to be soaked in water for a longer period than the seed that could be cleanly cut.

Having collected the seed pods I immediately remove the seed by hand and soak them in cold water for 12 hours. I have found that any other way of removing the seed from the pods, such as forcing them through a sieve is damaging to the soft seed. The seed is then sown in a 50/50 peat/sand mixture. The seed boxes are placed in a 30% shade house and the box is covered with a sheet of clear glass. Three to four weeks later the seed germinates with about a 90% success rate. In eight to ten weeks the seedlings are ready for tubing up.