


Urtica ferox

<i>Urtica ferox</i>	
	
<i>Urtica ferox</i> leaves and spines	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Eudicots
(unranked):	Rosids
Order:	Rosales
Family:	Urticaceae
Genus:	<i>Urtica</i>
Species:	<i>U. ferox</i>
Binomial name	
<i>Urtica ferox</i>	

Urtica ferox, commonly known as **ongaonga**, is a nettle that is endemic to New Zealand. Sometimes known as the "tree nettle", ongaonga has woody stems and unusually large stinging spines, and can grow 5 metres tall. Even the lightest touch can result in a painful sting that lasts several days.

In Maori folklore, Kupe was said to have placed several obstacles to hinder pursuers whose wives he had stolen, one of which was the ongaonga.

Ongaonga is the main food plant for larvae of the New Zealand red admiral butterfly or kahukura, *Vanessa gonerilla*.

There has been one recorded human death from contact—a lightly clad hunter who died five hours after walking through a dense patch.^[1] Acute polyneuropathy can occur due to *U. ferox* stings.^[2]

References

- [1] *Poisonous native plants* (<http://www.teara.govt.nz/TheBush/NativePlantsAndFungi/PoisonousPlantsAndFungi/1/en>), Poisonous Plants and Fungi (<http://www.teara.govt.nz/TheBush/NativePlantsAndFungi/PoisonousPlantsAndFungi/en>), Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand
- [2] Kanzaki M, Tsuchihara T, McMorran D, Taylor P, Hammond-Tooke GD., "A rat model of Urtica ferox neuropathy." *Neurotoxicology*. 2010 Dec;31(6):709-14

Further reading

- Connor, H. E. (1977) [1952]. *Poisonous Plants in New Zealand (DSIR Research Bulletin 99)* (2nd edition ed.). Wellington: Government Printer. ISBN 0-477-01007.
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- Hutching, Gerald (1998). New Zealand: Viking (Penguin). ISBN 0-670-87782-4. Missing or empty |title= (help)

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