

Fear of poisonous plants that corrode humans

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Nature is extremely rich and diverse. Besides the "gentle" plants, there are many extremely poisonous plants, capable of killing humans. *Urtica ferox*, a nettle distributed mainly in New Zealand is one of the world's most poisonous plants.



Urtica ferox, also known as Ongaonga in Maori, is sometimes called straight nettle or Taraonga, Taraongaonga or Okaoka. Unlike other herbaceous plants in *Urtica*, *Urtica ferox* is a large woody shrub



The tree is about 3 meters tall with long spines containing poison. They are sharp weapons that many animals and humans die.



The toxin in thorns of nettles *Urtica ferox* is triffydin (or tryfydin). This toxin contains histamine, serotonin and acetylcholine, powerful stimulants to the parasympathetic nervous system.



When hit by *Urtica ferox* spikes, the victim suffered a very painful reaction from a rash, itching, and dermatitis. Only 5 hemp stalks *Urtica ferox* are enough to kill a hamster. If there is a lot of prickly *Urtica ferox* stabbing, the victim may suffer from motor paralysis, hypotension, convulsions, blurred vision and confusion.



Urtica ferox nettles, the ultimate weapon of this plant, contain nerve agents that are lethal and also highly corrosive even when transient contact.



Even the victims are promptly cured, they are still capable of degenerating the nervous system, polyneuropathy.



In New Zealand, *Urtica ferox* nettles live in subtropical and temperate areas, *Urtica ferox* is very popular in the North Island but is limited to the South. In the South it is often found on the West Coast and on the Banks Peninsula.



Although nettle *Urtica ferox* is actually a highly toxic shrub, it also plays an important part in the development of red admiral butterflies (*Vanessa gonerilla*), a local butterfly. Nettle *Urtica ferox* leaves are favorite foods and provide protection for red admiral butterfly larvae.



In addition, nettle *Urtica ferox* is also used in medicine, treating diseases such as eczema, venereal, gonorrhoea. Even this plant is used as a Māori food but must be specially prepared.

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