



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA

Planting, sites of cultural significance, and archaeology:

What you need to know before you start your planting project

What is archaeology?

Archaeology is the study of past human societies through the excavation and analysis of artefacts, structures, and other physical remains. Archaeology helps us understand our cultural heritage and how people and communities lived, worked, and interacted with their environment in the past.

Archaeological sites are an irreplaceable part of our heritage. All archaeological sites are protected under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 which makes it unlawful to modify them without HNZPT consent through an Archaeological Authority.

What if you find archaeology?

If you accidentally discover archaeological evidence (shell, charcoal, bone, fire fractured stones, or historic artefacts including ceramic, bottle glass, metal) you must stop work, contact an archaeologist, and inform Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. If the site is of Māori origin, the appropriate papatipu rūnaka must also be informed.

If kōiwi (human remains) are found, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Regional Archaeologist, New Zealand Police and papatipu rūnaka must be advised immediately and no further work in the area may take place until future actions have been agreed by all parties.



Credit: Dunedin City Council

Are you modifying an archaeological or cultural site?

You could damage or modify an archaeological or cultural site if you:

1. Digging a hole into an archaeological site could modify it.
2. Planting the wrong species of vegetation on an archaeological/cultural site will modify it.
3. Any work that involves ground disturbance could modify an archaeological site.

Before you start planting

Identify whether there are archaeological sites or the potential for important cultural sites in or near to your planting area by:

1. Contacting your council's planning department who can advise on any consenting requirements.
2. Checking the Dunedin District plan map for archaeological and wāhi tupuna alert layers.
3. The New Zealand Archaeological Association's database of archaeological sites.
4. Consulting Kā Huru Manu the Ngāi Tahu Cultural Atlas.
5. Contacting Aukaha / local rūnaka office to confirm there are no significant sites.
6. Finding an archaeologist to assess the site and provide advice about a planting plan – include this cost in your funding application.



Shell midden, Pauatahanu.
Credit: Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.



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What are cultural sites?

Cultural sites and areas of significance to Kāi Tahu mana whenua are dotted across Te Waipounamu. These connect Kāi Tahu to their ancestral lands and waters, and include ara tawhito (travel routes) and wāhi tohu (location markers), kāika nohoaka (permanent or seasonal settlements), wāhi mahika kai (food gathering areas), wāhi taoka (treasured places) or wāhi tapu (sacred places), pā or urupā (burial areas).

The Resource Management Act 1991 requires that the relationship of Kāi Tahu to these areas is recognised and provided for, with district plans containing policies and rules to protect this relationship.



Historic bottles and pieces of ceramic excavated from an 1860s military site in the Wharepai Domain, Tauranga. Credit: Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

Recognising archaeological sites

Understanding the history of the location you are about to work in is key. Sites in Aotearoa New Zealand can include Māori pā and structures, gardening terraces and food storage pits.

Middens and rubbish dumps that may contain shells, bones, artefacts, charcoal, and oven stones. European archaeology can contain glass bottles, metal and ceramics.



Storage pits, Pairere, Waikato. Credit: Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

Avoiding archaeology

It is recommended that planting projects are assessed by an archaeologist prior to starting work.

Plan your planting to avoid modifying sites and to protect them. Archaeologists can advise which species of vegetation help conserve archaeological and cultural sites.

Links to resources

- Archaeological Authority
<https://tinyurl.com/2vsjyare>
- Archaeologist Directory
<https://tinyurl.com/2tprabr>
- Archsite
<https://archsite.eaglegis.co.nz/NZAAPublic>
- Aukaha (contact for checking cultural sites, can also advise which papatipu rūnaka to contact)
<https://aukaha.co.nz/contact/>
- Dunedin City District Plan
<https://www.dunedin.govt.nz/council/district-plan>
- Kā Huru Manu
<https://kahurumanu.co.nz/atlas>
- Papatipu Rūnaka
<https://ngaitahu.iwi.nz/ngai-tahu/papatipu-runanga/>
- Otago Native Planting Guide
<https://tinyurl.com/snuyhp6k>