

# 3. FLAX-STRIPPING + PLAITING TIKANGA

- No harvesting in rain, hail, snow, or at night.
- Never cut the central 'child' shoot (rito), or the two surrounding 'parent' shoots (awhi rito). The other outer 'grandparent' leaves can be harvested, clearing the way for younger generations.
- Cut leaves diagonally outwards, to prevent rain collecting in the centre and rotting the plant.
- Cut only enough for your project, and finish your project once started.
- Do not harvest while menstruating/pregnant (tapu states).
- Respect the flax. Keep food and drink away from the weaving area. Do not stand on or step over flax.
- Give your first flax fibre creation away as a gift.
- Wash your hands after working with flax and before eating. The sap of harakeke is used as a strong laxative.



## KARAKIA

<b>Te harakeke</b>	(Flax plant,
<b>Te korari</b>	flax flower,
<b>Ngā taonga whakarere iho</b>	treasure left down here -
<b>O te rangi</b>	of the earth,
<b>O te whenua</b>	of the people,
<b>O ngā tupuna</b>	of our ancestors.
<b>Homai he oranga mō mātou</b>	Give wellness to us.
<b>Tihei mauri ora</b>	Hear us.)

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# 3. FLAX-STRIPPING + PLAITING

## HARVESTING FIBRES (MUKA)

1. Cut harvested flax into 1.5cm wide strips.

2. In the centre of the flax strip, cut across the fleshy outer part of the leaf on the shinier side with a craft knife. Use protective gloves.

3. Place the blunt side of the butter knife underneath the flax strip against the dull side, just below the cut you made. With your thumb, press the leaf firmly to the blade.

4. Hold the strip firmly above the cut with your other hand, and pull away from you at a 90-degree angle to the knife blade so that the fleshy part that you cut through peels off, leaving the white fibres behind.

5. Pull until the fleshy part becomes detached from the rest of the fibres. Scrape both sides of the soft, white fibre to remove any residual waxy pieces of flax.

6. Turn the leaf around and remove the other half of the strip's flesh using the same method.

7. Done correctly, you should end up with a collection of soft, strong white fibres that can be plaited into a string. To plait, tie the fibres at one end, divide them into three parts and plait like hair, bringing alternating outer sections of fibres over into the middle of the other two.

8. Alternatively, it can be easier to just scrape the green waxy flesh off on a hard surface. You can often collect more fibres this way.

