

Prumnopitys - Care Guide

Growing Prumnopitys Taxifolia

Matai. Black pine of New Zealand.

(Formerly Podocarpus spicatus)

This is a most peculiar 'shrub' of which we have more than one specimen of in the garden at Caerhays. It will grow on into an interesting small tree, or so we are told, but, after 20 years here, our plants are only around 6ft tall and look half dead most of the time.

The habit of *P. taxifolia* is that of a dome shaped shrub with numerous drooping and dense branches and branchlets. These have a reddish tinge and, only when you look very closely, do you see that towards the tips the branchlets have small narrow bronze-tinted leaves. In early summer these leaves can be quite numerous but almost absent in winter.

Dacrydium dacrydiodes looks dead from a distance because its foliage is brown. This other member of the Podocarpaceae family looks leafless and dead for a different reason but both are not!

Near the entrance to Ventnor Botanic Garden sits a good example of *P. taxifolia* growing just as slowly as our plants but, after watching it for over 20 years, it is now developing into a small tree of 15ft or so in height. The reference books say that *P. taxifolia* is tenderish but we have not found this to be the case. It is just very slow and very odd!

Things were further complicated here with a yew like plant incorrectly labelled *P. taxifolia* which was actually the Chilean *Prumnopitys andina* (formerly *Podocarpus andinus*). Burncoose hopes to be able to offer both species on the website before long.



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