

Maramataka

The Maramataka is the traditional Māori lunar calendar. It was used to guide the planting and harvesting of crops, and fishing and hunting. It translates as ‘moon rotating’.



Takurua Winter

Pipiri (May – Jun)

The earth and its people are cold as the weather cools down.

The first month of the Māori lunar calendar is marked by the star cluster Matariki. This is a time of new beginnings and celebrations.

What is the history of your local area or family? Share this with your whānau and friends.

Hōngōngoi (Jun – Jul)

People are now very cold and make fires to keep warm.

Hōngōngoi is the coldest time of the year. A time to gather around the fire and share stories. This was one way of preserving oral traditions, history, and whakapapa.

Recall a traditional Māori story, like how Māui slowed the sun or the story of Rona and the Moon.

Hereturikōkā (Jul – Aug)

The warmth of the fire can be seen on the knees of people.

Hereturikōkā is a significant time for inanga (whitebait) as they migrate through fresh waterways, preparing to spend their adult lives there. This is also when people catch inanga to eat!

Find out about inanga, then draw and label the stages of their life cycle.

Koanga Spring

Mahuru (Aug – Sep)

The weather is becoming warm and plants are beginning to grow again.

It's time to prepare the gardens for planting.

Explore the world of plants by planting some of your favourite vegetables.

Whiringa-ā-Nuku (Sep – Oct)

‘Whiringa’ refers to a plait on a garment and ‘nuku’ to the earth. The two words together refer to spring growth.

Crops are planted and crayfish, eel, inanga, and freshwater fish are caught inland. The roots of the tī kōuka tree are dug up and used for medicinal purposes.

Consider the medicinal use of a New Zealand native tree of your choice. What are its nutritional properties? How is the medicine made? What illnesses or ailments does it heal?

Whiringa-ā-Rangi (Oct – Nov)

It is becoming summer, and the sun is strong.

Mutton bird (tītī) are caught and preserved, while crayfish and freshwater fish continue to be caught. Kahawai fishing season begins.

Research the hīnaki (eel trap). Draw and label the parts of the hīnaki and describe how it traps an eel.

Raumati Summer

Hakihea (Nov – Dec)

Birds are in their nests and the land is ploughed and lays bare.

Hakihea is identified by the rising of the star Rehua (Antares). Karaka berries are ripening and flowers are abundant. The pōhutukawa is in bloom and some crops are ready for harvesting.

Write a letter/poem to someone from a different country, describing the pōhutukawa tree.

Kohitātea (Dec – Jan)

Fruits are ripe and people eat the new food of the season.

Kohitātea refers to the gathering of summer fruits that are ready for picking at this time.

Survey your friends or whānau on their favourite summer fruits. Record your findings in a tally chart then transfer your data to a graph of your choice.

Hui Tanguru (Jan – Feb)

The foot of Rūhī (summer star) now rests upon the earth, indicating the end of summer.

Huitanguru is named for the tanguru – a large green beetle also known as the kekerewai – which was found throughout forests.

Write a report about a native beetle of your choice and share with your class or friends.

Ngahuru Autumn

Poutūterangi (Feb – Mar)

Crops are now harvested.

Poutūterangi is the star Altair, and it signals the maturing of crops. Soon after this star rises above the horizon the first kūmara harvests begin.

Using kūmara as the main ingredient, create an original recipe for a dish that will be sure to impress the whānau.

Paengawhāwhā (Mar – Apr)

Vegetation stalks and stems are stacked at the borders of the crop fields.

Around this time, kūmara leaves will start to go brown, signaling that the kūmara are ready for harvesting. Now is a time of thanksgiving for the main crop harvests.

Interview a kaumātua (elder) about their experiences of harvest or gardening.

Haratua (Apr – May)

Crops are stored in pits. Now it is time to rest.

Haratua is the time for storing harvested crops. Preparations continue for the coming winter.

Research and share with a friend traditional Māori storage containers.