



# Star Performers

## Five finger for winter to early spring

*Pseudopanax arboreus*: whauwhaupaku, five finger

Five finger is a Star Performer because it flowers from the middle of winter to early spring (June to August) when few other plants are flowering. Pollen from five finger can fully support spring bee colony “build-up” if enough flowering trees are within bee

foraging range (e.g. in Taupo). Pollen protein levels are good; our pollen sample had 21 % crude protein. Trees are small (8 m) and have distinctive palmate leaves with usually five leaflets radiating from a central stalk.



Male five finger tree with bee collecting pollen from male flowers Photo Richard Toft © Landcare Research Ltd.

**Pollen:** Each tree is either male or female because the flowers are unisexual with one gender per tree. Trees with male flowers deliver pollen and nectar. Male flowers are typical easy access “open dish” with five petals and five stamens bearing small anthers. The abundance of flowers on each tree makes up for the small size of the anthers so a good quantity of pollen is available per tree.

**Nectar:** In female trees, the female flowers produce only nectar and no pollen. Flower structure is peculiar because there are no petals or sepals. The flower is just a stalk with an ovary and stigma – that’s all. When nectar exudes from the ovary it looks like a flattened candy apple coated with sugar syrup. Such exposed nectar is easy access for all insects and a favourite for nectar-loving native birds like tui and bellbird.



Female five finger tree with bee taking nectar from female flowers. Photo Richard Toft © Landcare Research Ltd.