

Johann Wilhelm Weinmann (1683 – 1741)

Johann Wilhelm Weinmann was born on 13 March 1683, at Gardelegen, Germany, the son of Matthias Christian Weinmann, a barber. Little is known of his early life; he probably trained as a pharmacist in Hamburg, and he claimed later to have worked with physicians and apothecaries in many German towns. In 1710 he settled in Regensburg as a pharmacist's assistant, and in 1712, with his fiancée Isabella Catherine Furst, a prosperous wine merchant's daughter, he bought a house and run-down apothecary shop. He restored it to a fully functional and economic business, and during the 1713 plague epidemic it was a designated hospital pharmacy. He managed it until his death.

A series of disputes with other pharmacists and some of the town physicians arose out of his official position as hospital apothecary, but had no lasting effect on Weinmann's career. In 1722 he became a member of one of the town's councils, from 1725 to 1733 he was a commercial assessor, and from 1733 to 1740 he held the post of city assessor. In 1732, two years after the death of his first wife, he married Christine Catherine Pfaffenreuther, daughter of a town official, and purchased a bankrupt pharmacy business, which he built up into another thriving enterprise.

His wealth and circumstances enabled him to indulge in his love of botany, and his studies earned him considerable acclaim. He established a small botanic garden in Regensburg, wrote brief works on several plants in the Breslau collections and published a catalogue of drugs in his pharmacy. His major project, *Phytanthoza Iconographia* (1737–1745), extended to eight folio volumes with over a thousand hand-coloured engravings of several thousand plants. His first artist was Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708–1770), who was to become one of the foremost botanical illustrators of the 18th century. Unemployed and almost penniless when hired by Weinmann, he was dismissed at the end of the year when only half of his assigned one thousand illustrations had been completed, and was replaced by other artists and engravers. Regensburg physician Johann Georg Nicolaus Dietrichs wrote the text.

Phytanthoza Iconographia was published in both Latin and German, and a Dutch edition appeared in four volumes 1736–1748. A combination of traditional herbal and flower book, and impressive in size and scope, it received criticism for its shortcomings in scientific accuracy, for some of Weinmann's illustrators, unlike Ehret, had little or

no knowledge of botany. Weinmann died in 1741, before the work was finished. Browne and Linné (Linnaeus) completed it under the generic name *Weinmannia*, the name given also by Linné, in 1759, to a genus of Southern Hemisphere shrubs and trees.



Weinmannia racemosa

Weinmannia, a genus of about 190 species of shrubs or trees, have opposite, pinnate or simple leaves and racemes of fragrant flowers. The two New Zealand species are endemic. Kāmahi, *Weinmannia racemosa* (Latin *racemus* 'bunches of grapes or fruit'), is an abundant tree in lowland, montane and subalpine forest and shrubland, from about the centre of the North Island southwards to Stewart Island. Tōwai or tawhero, *Weinmannia silvicola* ('of the forest'), occurs only in the northern North Island. Sometimes beginning as an epiphyte on tree ferns, kāmahi is usually irregularly multi-trunked, and may grow to 25 metres or more high. Kāmahi bark was used by Māori to dye cloaks and mats of flax and kiekie fibres, and early Pākehā used it for tanning leather. The wood's tendency to warp and crack has limited its use, but the nectar-rich flowers remain a valuable source of popular kāmahi honey.