

Top tips: Salvaging water-damaged whāriki

Whāriki are large taonga requiring extra attention – plan your supplies, equipment, assistance required, and workspace before you begin. Photograph and document the general condition, paying attention to areas of damage. Following these steps will minimise the loss of flood-damaged whāriki, preventing further damage.

Mould can develop within 72 hours, but with quick deliberate action you can increase the chance of a successful recovery.

1. Understand your taonga

Tikanga is an important consideration, as some whāriki maybe used for tangi or covering kai. Follow necessary protocols before proceeding.

Whāriki in use are likely more fragile due to wear and tear. Fragile or worn plant materials become weightier, softer and weaker when exposed to water. More stable fibres will react differently. For this reason, ensure help is available to assist with handling. Treat in situ, if possible.



NATIONAL SERVICES
TE PAERANGI
TE PAPA TONGAREWA

2. Clear space for working

Set up a ‘dirty’ area for cleaning, and one ‘clean’ area for treatment. Placing tables together will create a large, flat workspace to support your whāriki. Ensure there is sufficient lighting, good air flow and fans to circulate air to help with drying. Provide large, sturdy handling boards onto which whāriki can be placed – large sheets of acrylic or timber covered with plastic are a good temporary solution.

3. Handle with care

To move whāriki, use a wide, plastic covered cardboard tube, or plastic pipe. DO NOT lift or turn whāriki without proper support. Cover with soft, absorbent material, like cotton towels or sheets, and carefully roll around the tube. Unroll whāriki carefully onto a flat, stable surface while supporting the mat and absorbent material.

4. Work quickly, work methodically

Dirt and mud can accelerate damage and should be removed immediately. Rinse away mud by pouring water across the surface with a jug. Use large, soft sponges to draw water away. Repeat, if necessary.

Partially wet whāriki should be gently rinsed with clean, cold water to prevent tide lines and staining. Once clean, place whāriki down on absorbent material and cover with another layer. Change absorbent layers regularly.

5. Control drying as much as possible

Gravity will slowly deform flexible materials that are wet. Promote air-drying by lying flat and elevating your taonga using bricks and a material with stiff backing. Use fans but not directly onto taonga. Change positions of the fans regularly. Stable mesh supports, like window or door screens can be used as a handling support, or a drying surface. Avoid hanging or draping over forms to dry as whāriki are particularly prone to distortion.

6. Reshape and gently flatten

Once your whāriki is ‘cool’ to touch, but no moisture is visible on the skin, weight can be applied to prevent distortion.

Place a plastic sheet over the absorbent material, then a stiff, flat layer, such as acrylic sheet, glass, a tile, or timber. For additional weight, books can be used, though aim to create a uniform flat area.

Change absorbent materials until your whāriki is dry.

Call a conservator if:

- Your taonga are badly damaged and require extra help. This also goes for any taonga accidentally damaged during salvage and drying.
- You find mould in your taonga and need further advice and assistance.
- You are unsure about any of the steps above.