

RANGITIKEI ENVIRONMENT

Treasured Natural Environment Group

Koitiata June Dune Planting

By Abi Wrightman, Department of Conservation

The beach at Koitiata was alive with hi-viz clad people of all ages on Friday 29th June. The students of Turakina School were invited to help Athol Sanson's team from the Rangitikei District Council, to plant dune plants that had been raised from seed gathered from sites very close to where the action took place last week.



Turakina School students planting at Koitiata

Weather conditions were perfect, as evident in the photos. The team of Turakina School students were joined by their principal Leigh Mackay, whanau of the students, staff from RDC and DOC (including volunteers). Once they were shown how to plant in the sand, there was no holding them back! 900 plants were established in their new home in under two hours.

Although some precious pingao (*Desmoschoenus spiralis*; golden sand sedge) was in the mix, Athol raised the profile of nihinihi (*Calystegia solandri*; shore bindweed) and noted how well it was prospering at Koitiata. He acknowledged the success of the work done by South Makiriri School

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the previous year at this site; those plants have adapted well to their beach home.



Turakina School students planting at Koitiata

After the planting, the students heard a legend about the pingao plant and went back to school, with two students offering to check on their work during the weekend. Many thanks to all for a great morning!



Turakina School students planting at Koitiata

Restoration of the Ferry at Scotts Ferry

By Jane Russell Bowen

Scotts Ferry Branch Rural Women New Zealand at Mr Scott's Ferry.

We were busy at our name sake's place on Tuesday 8 May giving our time, effort and money towards the restoration and landscaping of the Ferry.

The most talented and obliging Athol Sanson from the Rangitikei District Council gave us a recommended plant list and helped to place them on site.



The Ferry at Scotts Ferry on the left of the photo

Helping on the day were Karn Burke, Margaret Hawthorn, Jo Rangooni and Annabel Sidey. Jane Russell Bowen was also there behind the camera.

Restoration of the Ferry

Bulls and Districts Historical Society led the rebuild under the leadership of local Kevin Ellery (whose wife Marilyn is a Rural Women New Zealand member). Other Scotts Ferry locals helped Kevin with the timber work.

Diana Dyer, resident, and other members, put our collective hands up to implement and take care of the landscape planting.

Nigel Bowen put his tractor to work with rippers, the plants have gone in, and Annabel Sidey's son Simon offered truck loads of bark mulch.

Such community action!

Plants

Coprosma propinqua, carex, muehlenbeckia astonii, cordyline Australis, phormium tenax and olearia solandri.



Completed landscaping

History

Mr Tom Scott built and ran his ferry from the 1850s when the very early settlers were moving up the coast from Wellington.

They had their carts, carriages, furniture, baggage, horses and other animals all needing to cross the rivers on the way. The whole story of how the ferry came home is at the Bulls museum. Photos too.

Marton B & C Dams Restoration

By Athol Sanson, RDC Parks and Reserves Team Leader

On a sunny day in July a group of enthusiastic people gathered for a community planting day at Marton B & C Dams and the stream flowing into the lower dam from Galpins Road.

The morning planting at the Marton Dams focused on the area below the spillway along the banks of the Upper Tutaenui Stream.



Planting at the Marton B&C Dams

Around 500 plants were planted into this area in the morning which included Tawa, Totara, White pine, Coprosma, Cabbage Trees and Whiteywood. All plants were from seed collected from the Rangitikei / Manawatu Ecological districts.

The afternoon planting was hosted by Horizons Regional Council and David Smith (property owner), another 450 plants were planted in the recently fenced area from Galpins Road to the boundary of the dams.

This planting and fencing sees most of the streams and run-off areas around the dams now fully fenced and planted. This will greatly improve the quality of water entering the dams.

It was a fantastic day with everyone really enjoying themselves, and although a few people were sore

at the end of the day, seeing nearly 1000 plants planted was a fantastic community effort.

A spin-off from the day is that the planters wanted to be involved in future plantings, so it was decided that regular plantings be undertaken at the Marton Dams until the end of August.

If you are interested in helping with this project, **plantings are being held every Wednesday until the end of August. The plantings run from 10am though to 12pm** and are focusing on the Upper Tutaenui Stream.

If you are interested in attending one of these days please contact Athol at the Rangitikei District Council on 06 327 0099 or 027 403 1604.

Conservation Week 2018

Abi Wrightman, Department of Conservation

Conservation Week is approaching quickly 15 – 23 September 2018. Conservation Week is run by the Department of Conservation annually “*to encourage people to get involved in nature and help to take care of it.*”

This year the theme is ‘**Protecting Native Species**’. You can find events on the Department of Conservation [website](#).

Please contact Abi Wrightman if you are thinking of running a Conservation Week event.

awrightman@doc.govt.nz

027 540 5412



New Native Gardens in Taihape

By Athol Sanson, RDC Parks and Reserves Team Leader

Taihape's gardens have recently undergone a transformation with native plants. Council is involved with the project, alongside the Taihape Community Board and Keep Taihape Beautiful.

The current gardens have started to create visibility issues with local carparks and pedestrian crossings.



New garden in Taihape

The gardens will be planted with species native to Taihape, grown from seeds collected locally. The plants will be adapted to Taihape's conditions – dry in summer and cold in winter.

A total of ten varieties of plants will be planted in eight gardens around Taihape, with a sample previously grown at Memorial Park so people could see that was planned.

The gardens will also feature Taihape boulders, called concretions. While locally sourced, they have high amenity values and are commonly used for landscaping around the country.

Philosophy = “right plant for the right location”.

Enviroschools Kumara Growing Project 2017/2018

By Ron Fisher, Rangitikei Enviroschools Facilitator

The project started on September 19th 2017 with a workshop held at The Marton Community Gardens. Local Enviroschools Facilitator, Ron Fisher organized the workshop in conjunction with Nadia Gower and Cath Ash. The workshop was led by Nick Roskruge, Senior lecturer of Horticulture, Massey University. Nick involved a team of students from around the world who study under him. Participants were from a variety of backgrounds including teachers and community members.



Participants at the workshop

The first workshop was to introduce participants to the methods of sprouting kumara in order to grow shoots (tipu) which are the seedlings that are then planted to grow the kumara. This can be done in a variety of ways but for the purposes of growing at schools and in the classroom, we used ice cream containers filled with a mix of sand and bark. This tapapa (kumara seed bed) held two average sized kumara (organic, red Owairaka variety) and we placed these half in the growing medium.

Participants were instructed to put these in a warm place such as a windowsill and keep them watered. Approx 6–8 weeks later the tipu would be ready for planting.



Tipu (shoots)

A follow up workshop was held on December 7th at the same location. The purpose of this workshop was to discuss how participants got on with growing the tipu and to show them the next step of planting. A dedicated kumara bed was established thanks to a grant from Te Puni Kokiri. This was a 3 x 8m bed filled with compost and ready for planting.

Some participants had more luck than others with the tipu and some of the factors included the watering and the amount of available heat depending on the positioning of the tapapa. We found the orange Beauregard kumara was not sprouting as quickly by this time but it did eventually with more time. They were a larger kumara and that meant there was a larger amount to heat up before it could sprout.

We planted the crop and gave each tipu a cup of water. That is all the water they will need to get started. Kumara like it hot and dry, however we were advised that if it was a very dry summer and

it didn't rain for three weeks that we could water them if needed.

The tipu would wilt over the first couple of weeks but this would promote root growth and then when they take they will be stronger and have more roots in which to produce kumara from.

Participants then went away with tipu to plant at home and school.

Kumara is a great crop for schools because it doesn't need much attention over the summer holiday period. Some weeding will help so the kumara is not competing for nutrients, light and water but apart from that, little tending is required.



Kumara planting

We were advised to check the kumara around late March/early April by 'bandicooting', the process of digging carefully around a plant to see how sizable they are. Kumara require five months of summer heat to grow well, this would mean our crop would be ready by May 7 however this is a little late as the weather will have cooled down too much by then for the kumara to grow so we planned the harvest for April 27. In the weeks leading up to harvest, we watered the kumara to help them fatten up at the late stages.

The weather this year was ideal for kumara, a long, hot, dry summer but with enough rain in

March/April to help fatten the kumara up before harvest.

The harvest was a huge success. An initial dig found some very sizable kumara and with a rush of spades and hands we had pulled a number of wheelbarrow loads out in no time. Because the soil was so free draining, the kumara had burrowed quite deep and so volunteers continued digging for an hour or so to make sure every last kumara was found. We then sorted these into piles according to size and quality. The best looking ones will store the best and the damaged ones will need to be eaten quickly. After a couple of weeks of curing in the sun (but out of the rain), the kumara will be stored and given away to the community each week via the Food is Free wagon outside the Project Marton office.

Many schools across Rangitikei and Whanganui participated in this project producing great results. For every seed kumara we sprouted in our tapapa, we got around 10 or so tipu. From planting 10 tipu we could yield over 10kgs of kumara.



Kumara harvesting

Students enjoyed weighing their harvest and calculating the value of this based on current prices in the supermarket.

In many cases, other teachers and students who weren't directly involved in this project were inspired to give this a go next year. We encouraged schools to save kumara seed for next year and they will be able to use the same garden bed with little input, just some fresh compost and mulch and they will be ready to go to plant another crop at virtually no cost. This time around we expect an even greater uptake from classrooms across the schools now that they can see what is possible.



Harvested kumara

Overall this project was a huge success. Teachers now have the knowledge and experience to do this again and we will put together clear instructions for them to follow and remind them in September when it is time to start planting the tapapa.

Kumara is such an important part of Maori tradition, being one of the main crops that were grown year after year and was a staple carbohydrate food source.

Schools can study the traditions by talking with locals and researching these traditions further. Kumara is a favourite food for many New Zealanders and is not always affordable to all families. Kumara can be cooked at school, shared with families or sold for money to go back into more gardening projects. By successfully growing

a popular crop, students gain confidence and interest in working on something productive in the outdoors, which we know has many benefits.

I would like to thank Nick, Rodrigo and the team from Massey University for sharing their passion and expertise with us resulting in some very valuable knowledge to be passed down for the next generation. I would also like to thank Nadia Gower, Cath Ash and all the volunteers at the Marton Community Garden for their manakitianga during this time.



Harvested kumara

Community Contacts

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Tutaenui Stream Restoration Group

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Enviroschools

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If you have any contributions to the newsletter, any questions, or wish to subscribe please contact

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