



**Awhitu Peninsula
Landcare Inc**

Enviro News

Alien Invasion!

Increased sightings of Moth Plant (*Arouja Sericifera*) have been reported to us in recent weeks.

Many people presume that the common name relates to the papery pink and white flowers that smother the plant in March but the truth is a lot more sinister.

Also known as the Cruel Vine, these flowers have a very sticky nectar which can trap unsuspecting moths, butterflies and bees that visit them. Once trapped, they become exhausted and die slowly from starvation, their corpses hanging from the flowers.

The cruelty doesn't stop there - this plant is one of our worst weeds. It smothers and strangles its way through the bush till nothing else can survive. Attack it with a blade and like the Alien in the movie it will bleed noxious fluids that are poisonous and can burn, causing severe skin irritation.

Get Pod Picking - Moth plants spread easily when their distinctive, fist sized, choko like pods explode and release thousands of fluffy seeds. These pods are easy to spot and should be removed as quickly as possible.

Wear gloves when doing this to avoid skin damage from the milky sap. The pods need to be burnt or deeply buried - don't compost!

The plants themselves will need treating with a 'brushkiller' type herbicide (Tordon or Yates Woody Weedkiller) which can be painted onto the cut stump or carefully sprayed onto foliage. It will often regrow so will need follow up treatment six months later when any nearby seedlings can also be pulled by hand.



Above: Moth Plant seed pod - destroy, destroy!
Below: 'Cruel Vine' lives up to its name with entrapped butterfly



Green finger disease on the rise

Our Landcare Nursery potting days are proving very popular.

Last month we were delighted by the numbers of people that came along to lend a hand, spin a yarn and down a cuppa.

This was most welcome as this time of year is always busy - gearing up for the planting season that is just around the corner means we need all hands to the pump - weeding, potting on and pricking out.

We know some of you struggle to attend our regular monthly sessions - life gets busy.

If you want to come in on a more casual basis then please feel free to pop along any Tuesday or Thursday morning when you are always most wel-

come, and can lend a hand with the day to day running of the nursery.

Just bring a pair of gloves and you too could become another Green Finger victim...

Below: Debbie and Martin help out with the nursery's many plants.

Below: Volunteers enjoy a cuppa after a recent potting session at the Landcare Nursery.



So far, so good...

With the subject of water quality - integral to every living thing - a major media topic, it has been timely for Awhitu Landcare to investigate our local waterways. There are many spring-fed wetlands and tiny streams throughout the Peninsula, and with 'dirty dairying' a favourite mantra, testing around a dairying stronghold was the priority.

Early testing of the Kauritutahi Stream on a farm belonging to Dave and Kathy Millar showed very good water quality and abundant life, from eels (tuna), galaxiids (kopuku) and freshwater crayfish (koura). Dave and Kathy have undertaken extensive fencing and riparian planting of their section of the stream.

Sophie Tweddle of Wai Care is helping Awhitu Landcare establish a regular testing programme in the Waimatuku catchment - still a stronghold of dairy farming on the Awhitu Peninsula. Brian and Maree Hamilton have kindly allowed us to access a stream on their West Coast Road dairy farm. This is undertaken in each of the four seasons - spring and summer tests have been completed - with Sophie describing the water quality as "very good". Tiny freshwater crabs and inanga have been present at both testings.

Sophie tells us: "It's really good to have found galaxiids in the stream - they may be spawning on the spring tide. During autumn, adult Inanga (a

species of whitebait), migrate downstream to where the seawater meets freshwater from the stream.

"During the highest high tides, female inanga release their eggs among riparian plants, which are fertilised by the milky white milt released by male inanga.

"Once the tide goes out the fertilised eggs stick to the riparian plants, which become exposed to the air. During the next highest tide, larvae hatch and falling tides carry the larvae out to sea where they stay during winter".

Waimatuku stream flows out of a spring fed wetland which has been destocked and fenced off, with the headwaters in covenanted, mature coastal forest. Restoration planting has been completed by Awhitu Primary School children under the Trees for Survival programme.

Below: Inanga from the Waimatuku catchment.



Community Planting days

Join us as we care for public area plantings throughout Awhitu Peninsula this winter. All start times 10am unless noted, and we're usually finished by midday. We can promise an invigorating start to the day, and that 'halo' feeling afterwards that you are doing something really worthwhile!

For more details contact Landcare.

Sun 25 May -

Sun 1 June -

Wed 25 June -

Sun 13 July -

Sun 27 July -

Sun 3 August -

Sun 17 August -

Pollok Wharf

Hamilton's Gap / Waimatuku

Awhitu Lighthouse (start 9.30am)

Matakawau Walkway (by Awhitu School)

Hattons Road Walkway

Awhitu Central Hall

Awhitu Central Reserve wetland

Bouquets to Local Board and Council

We applaud the efforts of the Franklin Local Board to meet once a month with volunteer community groups and help them through the - sometimes convoluted!! - process of dealing with the Auckland Council behemoth. And,

we must say we also recognise the efforts of the Auckland Council biodiversity and biosecurity teams who are meeting with environmental groups to try and smooth pathways... next meeting in Waiuku on 29 April.

Tuis the best copycats ever?

Local plant expert Tricia Aspin, who carries out Landcare's bush monitoring programme, reports:

"Am fascinated by a bird call first heard during my last monitor and have now concluded that tui have imitated the 'lost' call of turkey or pheasant chicks. Three tui in different parts of the bush had the same call - would start with the new call then break into

the usual tui call."

And another of our volunteers was frequently startled over summer to hear lambs bleating in nearby bush ... when there are no sheep farms for miles around... yes, you guessed it another tui family having a laugh at our expense. Do you have a story of tui copycat behaviour? Let us know at Landcare - we'd love to hear from you.

**Contact
US...**



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