



Awhitu Peninsula
Landcare Inc

Enviro News



Labours of love

Our Labour Weekend walks are always popular occasions, and this year was no exception. David Craig and daughter Charlotte led a group of more than 50 walkers across their Puketapu property. Compared to last year, when a howling gale and driving rain assailed us, this time it was warm and summery with coats being shed and sunglasses donned. This allowed us to enjoy stunning views, admire ancient native trees and linger beside a

tranquil waterfall in the cool shade of regenerating bush blocks that have been behind protective fences for many years now. Puketapu Estate is one of the most historic on the peninsula and David gave us an insight into the lives of his early settler ancestors. The sites of the old estate homestead were observed and we wandered down part of the original old road that was used to transport goods to the harbour.

The hard work that David and his family have put in over the years is certainly coming to fruition but they are not content to rest on their laurels. This year alone, thousands more plants have gone into a new wetland area and we look forward to a return visit in years to come to see its progress.

Above: Charlie braved the potential 3m fall off a log to admire the waterfall. Above left: Walkers were dwarfed by this ancient pohutukawa.

Council keen to assist environmental initiatives

Last month the Awhitu Peninsula was host to two teams from Auckland Council, who came to learn more about the area, and ask the community how Council could assist local environmental initiatives.

Teams from Biodiversity (fostering the variety of life) and Biosecurity (protection against pests) met with representatives from local community groups and individuals concerned with environmental issues.

Council were keen to em-

phasise to workshop attendees that they are there to help; that they have a great deal of expertise available, and they would like to assist in ways which the community wants. Not dictating, but supporting.

It was a very positive day. For many this was their first experience of the Peninsula but all agreed it wouldn't be their last.

Below: Workshop attendees visited the Awhitu Landcare native plant nursery.



Brazilian Bush Brutes

When it comes to surveys that rank the 'Best Cities in the World', Auckland seems to be a regular feature in the top five. Sadly we also punch above our weight in another category - Weediest Cities of the world - top of the list. Whilst many of weeds go unnoticed, there are some that can't be ignored.

Woolly nightshade is now so prevalent in our region that it could displace pohutukawa as the Auckland Council logo.

Hailing from South America, this easily identifiable, invasive plant is covered with downy hair that can irritate the skin, eyes and nose and lead to allergic reactions. Although its yellow berries are poisonous to humans and stock, they are highly attractive to birds who then spread the seed far and wide. This seed can last in the soil for up to 30 years before germinating and forming dense stands that shade out native seedlings. As well as being fast growing (2m in a year), they also secrete a substance that actually stops other plants from growing around them - these unwanted aliens are truly nasty.



Control Options:

- Small plants and seedlings pull out easily - destroy, they easily regrow
- Cut and paste - larger plants can be cut and the stems immediately painted

with herbicide such as picloram gel (Vigilant) or metsulfuron (Escort)

- For larger stands you may have to resort to overall spraying with herbicide such as metsulfuron with penetrant (Pulse) or Tordon Brush-killer

- Follow manufacturers' recommendations - check yearly to catch newly germinated seedlings.

Woolly nightshade is identified by Auckland Council as a containment pest plant which means that landowners / occupiers are required to control the weed at least 20m from their boundaries. If you have a serious flannelweed problem in your area, contact Auckland Council Biosecurity officers for assistance.

Inset: Council weed management policy states landowners must control woolly nightshade at least 20m within their boundaries.

FREE!

Cat Collars save Birds



Vet-approved cat collars to Waiuku RD3 and RD4 residents. These can cut bird kills (est. 5 million a year killed by cats) by 50%.

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A Christmas light for Tane Mahuta?

The Awhitu Peninsula is rightly recognised as being an enormously valuable area of Auckland when it comes to the natural environment - we share our space with over 40 rare or endangered species. Sadly, we are one of the few areas that has been affected by the dreaded Kauri Dieback disease. Once infected by this pathogen, Phytophthora taxon Agathis (PTA), our mighty lords of the forest quickly succumb and there is only one outcome - death.

Or rather, that used to be the case - now, a treatment for individual trees is giving promising results in initial trials.

This bright light comes in the form of injections of phosphite into trunks of infected trees. These have been trialled by Plant and Food Research at sites in Waitakere and Northland and have been found to halt the disease. It is not yet known how effective the treatment will be in the long term or how frequently it will have to be applied but it brings hope where once

there was only a death sentence. It may be some time before the treatment can be rolled out, so right now the only effective response we have to this killer disease is prevention.

Many may be planning activities over the holiday period in areas containing Kauri which could be infected or susceptible to infection. The Coromandel, Hunua and many other areas are still free of this disease so let's keep it that way.

- Keep to defined tracks - away from the

roots of kauri trees

- Clean and disinfect footwear thoroughly - both before and after leaving any area containing Kauri - 0.5g of soil is enough to spread the pathogen

- Steam clean your mountain bike / trail bike

- Keep dogs on a leash - they also spread PTA spores on their feet

- If there is a Kauri Dieback Cleaning Station then USE IT - up to 80% of visitors to Waitakeres walk past them.