



## Meet the enemy!



### Pulsing Programme Favoured

In consultation with Council biosecurity specialists we believe that a programme of pulsing – only filling bait stations during three key months of the year – may be even more effective than a more frequent filling regime.

The three pulsing months recommended are: August / November / April. So – with August upon us – it's time to take action people! Prevent the grim scenario in this photo from happening in your back paddock. Hint: A visual 'blaze' up a tree trunk where the bait station is positioned – consisting of standard flour mixed with a small amount of icing sugar and cinnamon – can dramatically increase the effectiveness of your bait stations (possums can only smell bait within a 5m radius and will not return to a station where mouldy bait / no bait has been found in the past, unless there is an added attraction).

### What's coming up, mark your diary

Next planting days: 21 August – Pollok Wharf, Pohutukawa planting. 25 September – Awhitu Central 'wetlands' area

Next field trip: Labour Weekend – Sunday 30 Oct – Freshwater fish – a great one for the kids. More details nearer the time

Contact us:

We are based at Pollok Corner – open Mon to Fri 9am to 12.30pm

P: 235 1616 E: landcare@awhitu.org.nz W: www.awhitu.org.nz

## Wanted: dead or alive!

Community groups like Awhitu Landcare are known for being the "canaries in the coal mine" for problems that appear in our natural environment.

Unlike central or local government, our members and supporters are on the ground 24/7 and when an issue arises, are often the first at the scene of the crime.

Recently we have been noticing the rise of a potentially disastrous weed in our area - Climbing Asparagus (*Asparagus scandens*).

Once a garden plant from South Africa, this escapee is now galloping through our bush blocks at an alarming rate.

Able to grow in the shade, it forms a dense blanket that smothers and ring barks, killing everything it covers and preventing regrowth of native seedlings.

Unlike Wandering Willy, it is spread rapidly by birds and so we are even finding it in the centre of large areas of protected bush.

Left unchecked it will cause untold damage.

### How you can help:

We need to know the extent of the infestation of this weed so that we can work on how best to control it.

Take a look at these photos (or google it for more) and let us know if and where you have seen it.

(You can contact the office on 235 1616 or email us details at landcare@awhitu.org.nz)

- Start the fight back! If you find it - destroy it!

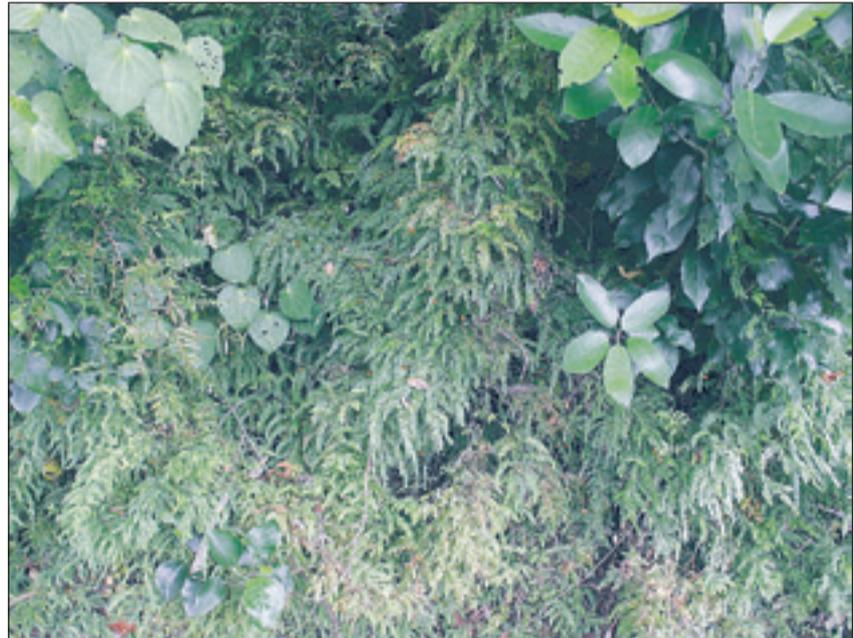
- Dig it up (including all the roots and tubers) and burn it - or

- Cut stems to 60-100cm above ground and spray with glyphosate herbicide (Round Up) preferably in spring or early summer.

- Return to the scene of the crime and repeat yearly until the battle is won.

- Keep a watchful eye out for the small seedlings and pull them out while they are still easy to remove in one piece (they are very small at this stage!)

*Below: As can be seen in this image; climbing asparagus smothers native seedlings.*



us yet again how vigilant we all need to remain in this constant battle against our old enemy.

We have not relaxed our efforts and Awhitu has many, many willing landowners who regularly carry out possum control, but it doesn't take too long before pockets of these pests can form, especially if weather conditions have been as favourable as they were over the past Summer / Autumn.

*Above: The Enemy! Image Courtesy Nga Manu Images*

throughout the Peninsula. The good news is that results remain pleasingly low over the majority of the 22,000 hectares.

The bad news is that we definitely have a Hotspot forming within the difficult-to-access north western area of the Peninsula which has to be swiftly dealt to before it spreads into 'clean' areas. We are attending to this!

Whilst we were initially very disappointed to learn about this Hotspot, it has bought home to

In the last EnviroNews we noted that one of our methods of possum control is running trapline tests - lines of ten traps, checked daily by independent contractors with details of any possums caught recorded. In this way 'Hotspots' – any areas where high numbers of possums are caught – are able to be identified so that we can quickly tackle these potentially dangerous clusters.

Over the past month 32 trapline tests have been run

## With spade and shade; into the future

The planting season is now upon us and recently we have been involved in two planting days on the peninsula.

The first, at the Manukau Heads Lighthouse in conjunction with Waiuku College students, saw hundreds of pohutukawa and flax going into the ground.

The second was at Awhitu Central Reserve, where a 1000 or so plants funded by Auckland City Council have been put in to replace a large area of weedy paddock.

It is hard to believe, looking at this area now, that little more than a year ago most of it was covered by impassable 3m high gorse and pampas. A com-

plete transformation is underway.

Many thanks to our volunteers for the great turnout in times of questionable weather – as the seasons pass, these areas are going to look better and better, and the trees will progress into majestic old age to be enjoyed by many generations to come.

Our labours today will be a thing of the past.

Plants for important projects such as these are primarily sourced from our community shadehouse, which is now nearing the end of its useful life.

Our AGM in June was the opportunity to put on show our plans

for a larger, purpose-built shadehouse facility on the edge of the local purpose reserve at Matakawau.

Guests were taken over the site adjacent to the Awhitu School so that we could explain the planned design and they could visualise the facility in place.

Our vision was greeted with unanimous enthusiasm - so fingers crossed that we are able to raise the funds and bring this initiative to fruition.

Plans for the proposed shadehouse can be viewed at the Landcare office – open weekday mornings.

*Right: an example of catchment planting in Raglan*

