

# Gorge Gazette

## News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

Abbreviations:

WCC = Wellington City Council

GW = Greater Wellington Regional Council

Footbridges over the stream are numbered from 1 – 6 going downstream (excluding the old bridge off the side of Wightwick's Field).

### DECEMBER 2008

The battle with the weeds has reached its seasonal climax - just when our "troop" numbers are depleted, with the wind-down as Christmas approaches. But strategies are afoot.....

#### Gorse

The days of gorse occupation below Trelissick Crescent are numbered. Our attack is two-pronged:

- cutting tracks and planting natives within the gorse
- clear felling, heavy mulching and planting.

The latter is quicker. Following an earlier successful revegetation, Malcolm McDonald is refining the technique as he cuts and clears a large patch, hand-carrying mulch from the roadside mountain (frequently replenished by WCC). The mulch stifles the prolific gorse regrowth. Malcolm extols the virtues of gorse firewood – his bonus.

#### Weed Spraying

Spraying *Tradescantia* (wandering willy) and Japanese honeysuckle from WCC/GW funding has recommenced. As a precaution against by-kill, we have staked and manually cleared around any young plants within the *Tradescantia*.

#### Possum Baiting

Our 19 possum bait stations are contributing to more natural seedling survival and more birds in the park to spread the seeds. Bill Hester was surprised to find this month that most bait stations were empty, after the September refill. Rats are also partial to the bait and GW advise that rats seem most active in spring. The minimum breeding age of a rat is 3 months, after which they can breed every month. So we will be checking the bait stations more frequently at this time of year.

#### Mustelid Traps

Justin McCarthy and Stu Bailey of WCC introduced Bill Hester, Barry Durrant, Lize Dela Ruelle and Peter Reimann to the 14 newly installed mustelid traps, using eggs to entice stoats, ferrets, weasels and rats to their fate. These are arrayed down the valley near the streams, where the mustelids prefer to be. So far, the traps are being checked every fortnight, but in 2 months only 3 rats and 1 stoat have succumbed.

#### Willows

Some parts of the valley look like disaster zones, with felled willow trees sprawled across the stream and on banks – may they quickly rot. Each stream surge flushes more dead branches into the debris trap.

#### Are Home Nurseries Addictive?

The homes of Carolyn Theiler, Marilyn Hester and Peter Reimann are bursting at the seams – seedlings in pots in every available space and bags of potting mix stacked against walls.

Having planted the many heritage species and nikau palms purchased from the surplus stocks of the Manawa Karioi Society of Island Bay, we are now concentrating on low-growing ferns and grasses. These will be ideal to plant next year in the shady *Tradescantia* sprayed areas and beside streams. The grasses will also help to preserve the variety of Trelissick Park that many people appreciate, with forested areas alternating with open spaces and views to the streams not blocked by mid-story plants.

The Otari Wilton's Bush nursery gave us a surplus tray of bush rice grass (*Microaena avenacea*). We were startled to find that the tally was over 2,000 to pot up.

Membership drawn from Highland Park Progressive Association Inc., Ngaio Progressive Association Inc., Onslow Historical Society Inc., Private Landowners Group, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (Wellington Branch), Wellington Botanical Society, Wadestown Resident's Association.

We have been fortunate to get some funding from the Honda Treefund via Juzah Zammit-Ross of GW. So next planting season we will be getting 195 ferns and 12 tree ferns, in addition to the 200 ferns already ordered from FerNZ in Westport under GW's "Take Care" funding. Then, just to make a meal of things, Robyn Smith of GW suggested that ferns could be obtained as "plugs". One nascent fern sprouts from each "plug" - 64 to a tray and 2½ trays to a box. 320 have already arrived from Fern Factor Ltd in Christchurch, looking immaculate – see photo on the last page. They have now been potted. 640 more will be arriving in a month or so. The ferns are sourced from the Wellington ecological district. All species ordered are listed in the appendix.

With our ferns sorted out, we are now thinking more on supplementing the streamside grasses that Carolyn Theiler and Marilyn Hester have been propagating and planting. Following a walk through the park, Robyn Smith of GW is looking at what might be both endemic and available, from our remaining GW "Take Care" funding. The mysteries of grasses are gradually unfolding.

Many thanks to Andy Hollings for planting 30 or 40 rimu and kahikatea in the park under Project Podocarp funding.

### **The Transitory Potting Mix Mountain**

Nurseries cannot survive without potting mix. With the recent activity, it was decided to order 2 m<sup>2</sup> in bulk from NZ Bark in Porirua. The only place we could think for it to be dumped was on Trelissick Crescent – a highly synchronised operation, requiring precision dumping onto a tarpaulin and fast bagging by 4 people into 3 vehicles for transport to our 3 home nurseries. Surprisingly, execution took only 1½ hours. But a big afternoon rest ensued.

### **New Secretary**

Malcolm McDonald has relinquished his position as secretary, looking for more outside fresh air. Many thanks, Malcolm, for a fantastic job. Welcome to Fiona Glasse, who has volunteered to replace him.

### **Adopt-a-Spot News**

Welcome also to Nick Koirala and Claire Mortimer who have adopted a spot on railway land upstream of bridge 2. Claire and Nick's mother are keen gardeners. Farewell to Lize Dela Ruelle, who has moved.

The streamside grasses planted by the Tararua Tramping Club down from bridge 2 have done miraculously well, it was found after partial releasing.

Other known activities - apart from those from people who work at their spots unheralded:

- ACC released weeds in early December around their winter plantings uphill from bridge 6.
- Sylvia Dixon and Mark Collinge mulched around their streamside plantings up from bridge 1.
- Joe Girasol is at large, doing a wonderful job attacking weeds throughout the park.
- Edie Mathers, assisted by Peter Reimann, is keeping weeds at bay at the lowest entrance.
- Barry Durrant has tidied up his grassy site on railway land between bridges 4 and 5.
- Guides from Silverstream Road recently released around some plantings by bridge 1.
- George Symmes with his son Andrew are doing a great job on their spots between bridges 1 and 3.

### **Voluntary Work Plaudits**

Mayor Kerry Prendergast and GW Chair Fran Wilde have both expressed appreciation of all the voluntary work that goes on in our parks and reserves. Fran said that GW "could never be in a position to replicate the volunteer time contributed by the dozens of "care" and "friends" groups who look after the local environment." Kerry spoke in similar vein at the recent WCC volunteer Christmas party.

### **The Infamous Railway Corridor**

Vast tracts of buddleia, wattle, blackberry and Japanese honeysuckle inhabit the railway corridor bordering the park. A portion of this, below bridge 5, is a candidate for restoration, funded by the recently launched DOC Community Conservation Fund. Thanks to Robyn Smith of GW and Marc Slade of WCC for the preliminary work on the application, which will soon need input from On Track.

The Johnsonville line upgrade by On Track is in full swing, with huge excavations and the historic powder magazine area converted to a work site. Trucks and machinery are everywhere. Stu Bailey of WCC has been making valiant efforts to ensure that On Track and their contractors minimise disturbance to the park. Nonetheless, peace and tranquillity are not reigning at the lower end of the park at the moment.

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### Smothering Weeds

In summer, smothering weeds run rampant. One of the culprits is bindweed or convolvulus (*Calystegia silvatica*), which inhabits forest edges and is very difficult to remove. A few of our plants have fallen victim over the years. Bindweed has trumpet shaped white flowers and sprawls over and up other plants. It has twining stems and extensive underground rhizomes. As we have no permit to use spray, we just carefully cut and remove it from the tree, with the long-term goal of it being eventually weakened and overtopped/shaded out. Digging small infestations might succeed if all root material is removed - the plant can re-grow from these. The photo shows bindweed engulfing a young wineberry plant.



Balsam (family Balsamineae) also has potential to overwhelm new plants. This is an annual that likes streamsides and grows up to nearly 2 m tall in single upright translucent stems. Plants of the family have irregular purple flowers – see photo below. It is satisfyingly easy to pull out. Visitors are cordially invited to indulge.



### Highland Park Progressive Association (HPPA) Donation

Many thanks to HPPA for agreeing to meet the remainder of the cost for the second run of brochure printing (\$277.39).

#### Contacts

Secretary: Fiona Glasse (04) 934 0699, [glassefb@paradise.net.nz](mailto:glassefb@paradise.net.nz)  
 Working bees: Dorothy Douglass (04) 472 8558  
 Chairman & Adopt-a-Spot: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602, [peter.reimann@paradise.net.nz](mailto:peter.reimann@paradise.net.nz)  
 Wellington City Council (reporting slips and fallen trees across tracks, other problems): (04) 499 4444  
 Greater Wellington pollution hotline: 0800 496 734  
 Website: [www.trelissickpark.org.nz](http://www.trelissickpark.org.nz)

**Working Bees** (Check with Dorothy before coming – changes may occur)

Sunday 8 February, 1.30 PM Ngaio Gorge Road  
 Tuesday 17 February, 9.30 AM Ngaio Gorge Road

#### The Gorge Gazette

Compiled by Peter Reimann about every 4 months - all contributions and suggestions gratefully received.

***Come and participate in the transformation of Trelissick Park or give us your ideas – all welcome. Thanks to all who contributed. Happy Christmas and best wishes for 2009.***

### APPENDIX – SUMMARY OF FERNS ORDERED FOR 2009 PLANTING

#### Ferns in “Plugs” (GW “Take Care” Funded) = 960

128 Blechnum novae-zelandiae (kiokio)  
 128 Pellaea rotundifolia (button fern)  
 128 Blechnum fluviatile (kiwakiwa)  
 128 Asplenium bulbiferum (hen and chicken fern)  
 64 Asplenium oblongifolium (shining spleenwort)  
 128 Lastreopsis glabella (smooth shield fern)  
 128 Pneumatopteris pennigera (gully fern)  
 128 Leptolepia novae-zelandiae

Blechnum fluviatile (kiwakiwa)



#### Ferns in Pots (Honda Tree Fund)

= 195 Ferns + 12 Tree ferns

35 Adiantum cunninghamii (a maidenhair species)  
 20 Asplenium oblongifolium (shining spleenwort)  
 35 Blechnum discolor (crown fern)  
 35 Blechnum novae-zelandiae (kiokio)  
 35 Lastreopsis glabella (smooth shield fern)  
 35 Pneumatopteris pennigera (gully fern)  
 4 Dicksonia squarrosa (wheki)  
 4 Cyathea smithii (katote)  
 4 Dicksonia fibrosa (wheki-Ponga)

#### Ferns Previously Ordered in Pots (“Take Care Fund”) = 200

100 Asplenium oblongifolium (shining spleenwort)  
 100 Polystichum richardii (shore shield fern)