

Gorge Gazette

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

Abbreviations:

WCC = Wellington City Council

GWRC = Greater Wellington Regional Council

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

SEPTEMBER 2008

Most of the 3,500 plants we obtained or grew this year are "in" and relishing the damp legacy of winter. Tentative signs of spring are appearing.

Trees

We were beginning to despair - would we ever find enough "heritage" canopy trees to help restore the park to its former glory, using funding generously provided by St Luke's Wadestown, the Hunt family and "Fly and Plant" donations? Imagine our excitement when we learned that Manawa Karioi Society nursery at Island Bay had a surplus including kahikatea, matai, tawa, nikau, black maire, tree fuschia, pukatea and other species – 1,200 in all! We swapped a few of the 700 nikau for some bush rice grass from Otari Wilton's Bush, but most of the rest can now be seen all over the park. Held-overs include 70 kahikatea, 25 matai and 25 black maire repotted, ready for next year. It's a pity we won't be around in 100 years time to see the transformation in the park.

Now that possums are diminished, it's gratifying to see seedlings coming up naturally, especially titoki and rewarewa, with totara and pigeonwood emerging near parent trees.

For next year our focus will be on ground cover for the bare tradescantia sprayed areas. 200 ferns (*polystichum richarii* and *asplenium oblongifolium*) are being supplied under GWRC "Take Care" funding next year, and Carolyn Theiler and Marilyn Hester are experimenting with growing and planting other ferns. The funding will also be used to cut and spray blackberry on railway land downstream of bridge 5, then to plant in winter. The cut and sprayed Japanese honeysuckle areas above the gorge opposite the fish ladder will also be planted then.

"Sanctuary to the Sea" Track

The route of the track connecting Otari Wilton's Bush and Trelissick Park was investigated by David Halliday of WCC in conjunction with Jonathan Kennett, Otari Wilton's Bush Trust and ourselves. However, the project has come to a halt. The cost of the pedestrian tunnel under the Johnsonville railway line is too much. Does anyone have ideas for supplementary funding or have philanthropist friends? We are told more pedestrian level crossings these days are not to be entertained.

Johnsonville Railway Tunnel Upgrade above Magazine Building

To gain access by machinery for tunnel widening during summer, the Kaiwharawhara Stream will need temporary bridging and a track up the steep slope to the line. Further details will be available soon, but some planting will be affected. The area is to be reinstated by OnTrack afterwards.

Pest Weeds

The spraying for tradescantia (wandering willy) from joint GWRC/WCC funding will continue during spring, including:

- New work at the northern end of the park down to the gorge
- Follow-up of previous works from the gorge south
- Finishing below Hanover St.

The cut Japanese honeysuckle site above the gorge opposite the fish passage will be sprayed. Any left-over budget will be spent on more honeysuckle in that area.

Willows

The poisoned streamside willows are starting to shed branches or fall over. WCC will be selectively cutting some in late September. They will concentrate on those that might pose a safety hazard and those that would significantly affect water flow when they fall.

Possums and Mustelids

We have now taken over the servicing of the 19 possum bait stations in the park every 3 months. Bill Hester volunteered to take this on, with Peter Reimann as back-up. We are keeping records of bait consumption, which are copied to GWRC – there is evidence of some poison consumption at some bait stations.

GWRC have just installed some mustelid traps and training of volunteers will start soon. The stream will be the most likely area to catch stoats, but we will also catch rats and hedgehogs. Eggs are used as bait, so cats don't try and interfere with them. Are there any more volunteers?

Volunteer Groups and Visits

Many thanks to the volunteer groups who have worked in the Park recently, arranged through Volunteer Wellington and GWRC (origin/funder of trees in brackets).

- ANZ National Bank and the oil company OMV – planting upstream of the debris trap (GWRC).
- ANZ National Bank – releasing and planting upstream of bridge 6 (Home nursery)
- OMV again – releasing and planting downstream of bridge 6 (Manawa Karioi)
- Victoria University Disabilities Support Group – planting between the lower entrance and the magazine building (GWRC).
- Youth Environment Forum – planting by the debris trap (Ministry for the Environment)
- Global Volunteers – plant releasing at railway reveg site 1.
- Just downstream from the park, The Body Shop staff clean the stream outside, including weeding, picking up rubbish and planting new native trees on the last Friday of every month, in collaboration with GWRC.

Adopt-a-Spot

ACC have adopted a new spot downstream of bridge 6 on the Wadestown side. A team came to clear the site and plant. It is amazing what can be achieved by an energetic group in only 2 – 3 hours!

Barry Durrant has taken over railway reveg site 2, to oversee the planting plan for this area. This is one of our attractive “open” areas, which gets the winter sunshine. This year at a working bee we planted low-growing flaxes and toetoes at the northern end, but the rest of the area is being kept grassy. The group assisted the Hunt family with planting some miro, kahikatea and rimu around the southern bush margin in memory of Martin Hunt.

Shaun Matthews has adopted a streamside spot below the Waikowhai Street entrance and planted toetoe there to try to protect the stream bank.

Most of the people recruited by Kate Mackenzie under Ministry for the Environment Sustainable Management Fund in 2005 – 06 have kept up their excellent work of maintaining and planting their spots. Their plants were from WCC Berhampore, Manawa Karioi and home nurseries.

Thanks

Many people work quietly away, bent on improving and maintaining the park. Many thanks to:

- Carolyn Theiler and Marilyn Hester – to be found more often than not in the park, weeding, planting and experimenting in their home nurseries – the ultimate enthusiasts.
- Dorothy Douglass – for reminding people of working bees and conjuring up delicious refreshments.
- Malcolm McDonald – for diligent secretarial work, and carrying rubbish and many bags of weeds up the hill and many bags of mulch down the hill.
- Lindsay Bonnett – for updating the web-site.
- Barry Durrant – for organising the excellent brochure, including photographs.
- Frances Lee – as the “motive force” behind the group since its formation in 1991 until recently and now for her historical knowledge about the park and support.
- Bill Hester – for maintaining the possum traps and rubbish/weed/mulch carrying as for Malcolm.
- WCC Parks and Gardens staff, especially Myfanwy Emeny (now on maternity leave), David Halliday and rangers Steven Peters and Stu Bailey – ever willing to help in all sorts of ways to do with the improvement and day to day maintenance of the park.

- GWRC staff, in particular Robyn Smith and Juzah Zammit-Ross – for sourcing plants and organising volunteers (including tools and refreshments), under the “Take Care” funding and for help with planning.
- Those who turn up to the twice-monthly working bees and all the adopt-a-spot people.
- Bronwyn Shrapnell for her recent donation in appreciation of the improvements in the park.

Tribulations and Angst

- The Ngaio Gorge Road shed two cars in the last three months, with consequential damage to fencing, the lower gate and entrance shelter.
- For a while a camper took up residence in the lower valley.
- A graffiti artist is at large.
- Rubbish dumping continues, mainly at the car park half way up the Ngaio Gorge Road.
- The Kaiwharawhara estuary by the ferry marshalling area is still a shocking mess.
- Garden escapes are a concern (eg privet and a plant identified by GWRC as winter heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*) off Trelissick Crescent. Carolyn Theiler distributed a well-worded letter to all in the neighbourhood.
- With each bout of rain, we anxiously watch the streams. Black thoughts about fast storm-water run-off from the increasing hard surfaces in the catchment turn to fantasies of a new landmass appearing in Wellington Harbour, formed from stream banks swept away by the raging torrent.

Submissions

Will the need for submissions and appeals on issues in the Kaiwharawhara and Koromiko catchments that affect the park ever end? The current WCC policy drafts on walking, cycling and track recreation activities are allowing us to give further vent to the damage and hazards caused by cyclists illegally using the park.

Kiwi

Frances Lee and Mary and Michael Munroe’s large dog Kiwi were inseparable friends on walks through the park. Kiwi added to our enjoyment of working bees – a real “gentleman”, though displaying unwavering interest in proceedings at refreshment times. Sadly, he was getting old and with onset of illness, his time eventually had to come. He was a highly intelligent, exceptional animal, much loved by all.

Publicity

The new weather-proof brochure holders installed at 3 entrances are working well, with steady consumption of brochures and working bee pamphlets. Once again we had a display in the Cathedral in Molesworth Street for Conservation Week. GWRC produced some magnificent posters for our working bee during that week, which we installed in libraries and community notice boards.

Things Botanical



This year we planted some pukatea (*Laurelia novae-zelandiae*), in wet, part-shaded areas, such as just downstream of Wightwick’s Field and near Betty Northmore’s seat by the stream below Hanover Street. This magnificent tree can grow to 36 m, with a 2 m diameter trunk. Mature trees have a trunk with flange-like buttresses at its base. In swampy areas it has breathing roots (pneumatophones) projecting above the surface.

The leaves, as illustrated, are serrated, about 4 – 5 cm long and 3 cm wide and the leaf stems are square.

Pukatea occurs naturally in the Botanic Gardens, Khandallah Park, Otari-Wilton’s Bush, Huntleigh Park and Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. Any sightings of mature pukatea in Trelissick Park?



One of our problem weeds is mombretia (*Crocoshia x crocosmiiflora*). This can be seen throughout the park, mainly by streams and track margins. It is a perennial, with blade-like, erect leaves about 60 cm long. It is graced with attractive orange-red flowers in summer. It spreads from rhizomes and the corms (see at right of photo) and displaces native species.

We have had some success with manual removal, but all the corms need to be unearthed, then dispatched to a land-fill. A garden fork works well. If only the corms were edible.....

Contacts

Secretary: Malcolm McDonald (04) 479 5350, msmcdonald@paradise.net.nz
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Working bees: Dorothy Douglass (04) 472 8558

Chairman & Adopt-a-Spot: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602, 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

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

Sunday 5 October, 1.30 PM Waikowhai Street

Tuesday 14 October, 9.30 AM Trelissick Crescent

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.