

Kerikeri Shade House Volunteers Newsletter February 2023

The last newsletter occurred during enforced idleness after the nation was locked down on March 25th 2020 for Coronavirus. This one arises through enforced idleness because of Cyclone Gabrielle.

Most of us will remember the golden age of engineering, an age when the conventional thinking was that nature could and should be tamed but not always, we know now, without consequences. Think of the Aswan Dam, Boulder Dam or the Aral Sea. Nature seems to be fighting back and at our level we are learning it can be a powerful force even at a microscopic level. Myrtle Rust disrupted us in 2017 and we had to destroy about 125 pohutukawa (by we I mean Cherry and Carol who got the short straw and were very distraught). Corona virus disrupted us in 2020, and nature again disrupted us in 2022 when Mike Rowledge discovered a nest of Plague Skink eggs in one of our plants. The outcome was that we can no longer send our plants out to Ipipiri as Plague skinks are well established just about everywhere except on the islands of Project Island Song. In 2019 KK had a larger scale natural event - a prolonged drought, rather difficult to remember after recording 2618mm rain (on my site) in 2022, 350mm in January 2023 plus whatever Cyclone Gabrielle deposits on us.



A wet day at the office. One of many in 2022

What did we produce & where did it go?

After the Myrtle Rust crisis of 2017 we lost two of our largest customers with Bream Head Conservation trust and Mimiwhangata (not for the same reasons) and in 2022 Guardians of the Bay of Islands but the demand for our plants is greater than we can supply although we no longer supply plants to these larger clients. There has also been a trend toward producing fewer manuka and kanuka and growing larger plants as transport on islands is no longer a consideration.

Table 1. SH summary 2020 to 2022

Column1	No of projects	No of clients	Total plants
2020	67	41	21348
2021	58	35	17216
2022	52	42	17610

In total we have now produced 365,000 native plants. After a slump to only 12177 plants in 2018 following the Myrtle Rust hiatus, our annual output recently has settled at about 17000 plants p.a. fewer than in some years in the past but in larger bag sizes and usually of a wider range of species and about our limit of space.

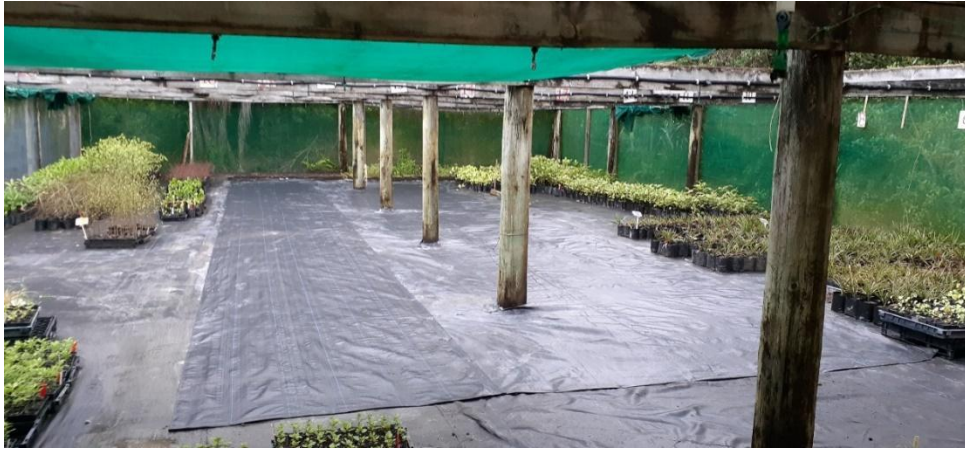
In my view it is perverse for N.Z. to seek to resolve its climate change obligations by buying carbon credits overseas and by planting more pinus radiata, which will be felled after a 27 year cycle and then nominally replanted, if indeed the companies (often domiciled overseas) still exist at that time. Native plants, though slower growing, will be permanent forest and carbon sink and support an entire eco-system. Our Shade House production is a modest and diverse contribution to this outcome in Northland.

Our infrastructure & maintenance

Of course, producing plants is our business and takes nearly all our effort. However, our infrastructure is critical to maintaining our business. Our structure was built in about 1978 by Lands and Survey about 45 years ago (so not quite as old us). When we inherited it was not very sophisticated and we have continually evolved. For many years the technical skills of Tony Holmes and Richard Tamaho modified and designed our watering systems, built our lunch room, extended bench space, extended the propagating house and built our shed. They were followed by Ian Cambourne who for 3 years toiled away making our operation more efficient by much attention to detail and also built some more work benches and shelter.

Maintenance however is ongoing. A high rainfall year in 2021 and frequent flooding of the main Shade House caused a decision to bring in a drainage contractor and the expenditure of \$8,925 of our funds to completely sort out stormwater. This has proved not only essential but money well spent as the seemingly months of endless rainfall has seen excellent drainage of our main shade house area including Cyclone Gabrielle and its predecessor about 2 weeks earlier. To help fund this the cost of our plants was increased for the first time in about 20 years.

Mike Thompson replaced our original 45-year-old shade cloth side curtains in 2021. In 2022 Mike T and Erik Lautenschlager spread and levelled fine scoria and replaced aging weed mat in the main shade house. They also levelled and doubled the size of the bank hard standing area (where we used to stand puriri) to give a sorting area. Stan Jackson has maintained the Shade House shade cloth covering system for the first time in about 15 years.



The new weed mat



The new hardstanding area. Erik leaning on his tools.

Shadehouse Trip 17th to 19th October 2022, by Rosie Hajnal

Thanks to Covid our first overnight field trip for three years at last eventuated, although sadly Theresa, Cherry and Bob were unable to go. Mike T, Maggy, Carole, Rosie, Rod, Peggy, Erik, Mike R, Stan and Jan miraculously managed to congregate in dribs and drabs at Eutopia Cafe at Kaiwaka, for what had by then morphed into a lunch stop. The upgrading, food, design and artwork of the cafe are now well worth a visit.

Our arrival at Scandrett Regional Park, coincided with rain, but a few hardy souls hiked up and over the farm's hills to explore this reserve located on the north-east tip of the

Mahurangi Peninsula, where sadly there were skeletons of huge pohutakawa and others in their death throes. The steep terrain and slippery slopes were something of a challenge.

Our accommodation at Martins Bay Motor Camp organised by Mike R proved very comfortable with our four cabins in a square, two with sea views (the men) and two with the kitchen view (the women). We were able to congregate for sundowners sheltered from the rain on the covered verandah. We'd been allocated use of the community room with attached kitchen which proved very helpful when we discovered this on evening two after spending the first evening fossicking around in the communal kitchen with equipment locked away! As always the self catered food proved prolific and delicious but Rod was disappointed by our lack of consumption of all the liquid refreshment he'd provided. Some of us appear to be losing our touch.

Mike R guided us on our exploration of Tawharanui Regional Park of which he had much knowledge, having been a volunteer in its formative years. From superb beaches, to dense bush the park was alive with birds, including a healthy population of kereru nodding off in the trees almost within touching distance. Despite our best efforts at getting lost we finally regrouped at the carpark and stopped at Matakana for a snack at a cafe/restaurant on the river with the most enormous eels surging around a small jetty waiting to be fed.

Another combined dinner and breakfast next day disposed of some of the mountain of food and we were joined that evening by Ian Cambourne before we packed up and drove to the Parry Kauri Park and Museum in Warkworth for a walk through some stunning bush with huge mature trees, and yet more birdlife. Everybody by this time beginning to suffer from malnutrition, our final stop on the way home to Kerikeri was at Cove, a great cafe at Waipu Cove opposite the beach.

The good company, great food, liquid refreshment (for the hardy) and beautiful places to visit (the main reason for our trip) were such a joy after the long Covid induced hiatus.



The truly glamorous but easily famished at the Eutopia Café Kawaka when we had hardly started



Farewells

During this period, we said farewell to Anthea Goodwin a dedicated environmentalist who died in September 2020 at age 89 in tragic circumstances. She was one of our founder members in 2000 and travelled to the S.H. from Mangonui, right to the end, every Thursday. Anthea below planting at Rangikapiti Reserve, a typical activity for her.



Zeeb too left us for Christchurch in late 2022. She joined us in 2017 after retiring from Plant Zone garden centre. We miss her expertise and energy.



Shirley Meloni, who joined the SH in 2004 has retired and will shortly be leaving our area. We wish her all the best in her new location.

Arrivals

We welcome Bob McReavy who came all the way from the U.S.A. to join us. We will gradually teach him proper English like barrow Instead of cart and soil instead of dirt but it is not expected to be quick or easy. Erik Lautenschlager has also joined us all the way from Netherlands, and so has Steve Byrne recently; and all of them being young (well almost) and fit, The Shade House output has noticeably multiplied.

Social occasions; it is not all work.



Mid winter Xmas lunch, Marsden Estate 2021



Picnic in the park January 2022 (above) and 2021 (below)



Visit to Reinga Reserve with David Lawton 2021



Thank you, Forest & Bird

Our thanks to Forest & Bird Far North branch, especially the Treasurer Michael Winch and the secretary Marianna Fenning who run our accounts. Without them we would be unable to operate in our unstructured way, which enables us to put our energies into plant production to support other community groups rather than a lot of structured administration.

Donations

We were able to donate again last year and our donations have reached an impressive total.

Donations by Shade House \$

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	total
Puketi Forest Trust	1000	1000	2000	2000	3000	3000	3000	3000	5000	4000	3500	3000	5000	1000	2000	41500
Saddleback nest boxes GBOI									2999							2999
Floating classrooms GBOI									563							563
Fertiliser tablets GBOI									220	220	220					660
Forest & Bird Wellington										4000	1500	3000	5000	3000	4000	20500
Ipipiri Conservation Trust (Elliot Farm)													5000			5000
F&B Te Kuha campaign														2000		2000
	1000	1000	2000	2000	3000	3000	3000	3000	8782	8220	5220	6000	15000	6000	6000	73222

