

**Otatara**  
**Landcare Group**

# PIGEON POST

*Newsletter of the  
Otatara Landcare Group*

**Issue 73 Winter 2025**

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*The full colour version of this publication is available on [www.otataralandcare.org.nz](http://www.otataralandcare.org.nz) under 'publications'.*



## ***Celebrating a silver anniversary***

*This year, the Otatara Landcare Group and the Bushy Point restoration project celebrate their 25th anniversaries. A celebration is planned for October 18 at Bushy Point to which all are welcome! The inspiring story of the OLG and Bushy Point is within this issue of Pigeon Post.*

# SUPPORT FOR PEST CONTROL



## City Council signs agreement with Otatara Pestbusters

Otatara Pestbusters has welcomed an agreement with the Invercargill City Council to formalise and strengthen the work carried out by volunteers, who provide pest control in Otatara's parks and reserves.

Otatara Pestbusters, part of the Otatara Landcare Group, uses traps and appropriate pesticides to target possums, mustelids and rodents which threaten native birds and biodiversity.

Dallas Bradley, who heads up Otatara Pestbusters, was appreciative of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding while Invercargill City Council Manager Parks and Recreation Caroline Rain said the partnership showed a shared commitment to environmental stewardship between Council and the Otatara community.

"The native bush and wildlife in Otatara is a source of pride for residents in the suburb and Invercargill," she said.

"With Council's assistance, the local community in the form of Otatara Landcare Group is stepping up the work to protect and enhance the natural environment that makes this area so special."

Introduced pests are a major threat to native ecosystems, such as Otatara's forests, dunes and wetlands. Pest species predate native animals

and their young, destroy indigenous plants and seeds, and ultimately alter the composition of the landscape, depriving native species of food and habitat, said Caroline.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) covers Otatara Scenic Reserve, Bowman's Bush and numerous smaller reserves around Otatara. The agreement formalises the relationship with Otatara Landcare Group and clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities that will allow volunteers to continue targeting harmful pests in their local parks and reserves.

Caroline said Council acknowledged the importance of community involvement in conservation. "The formalised partnership between Council and Otatara Landcare Group will help more people get involved and take ownership of pest control in their local area," she said.

"We look forward to seeing more of the great things that come from increased vigilance against pests, whether it's kākā visiting from Stewart Island, flocks of kererū flying overhead, or simply the beauty of our native forest when it is protected and flourishing."

Along with regular reports to Council, Dallas says the aim is to have pest control efforts across Otatara documented using trap.nz by September 2025.



*The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the ICC. From left, Cassandra Horton, Parks and Recreation Senior Open Spaces Planner; Dallas Bradley, who heads up Otatara Pestbusters; Caroline Rain, Manager Parks and Recreation, and Richard Johnson, chair of the Otatara Landcare Group.*



# SHELTER BELT ADVICE



## How to protect your property with native trees and plants

Everybody and everything needs shelter! Recently, with new subdivisions, we have been getting lots of shelterbelt questions, so here are a few ideas to start with.

Native or exotic? We of course favour native but not the one-row single-species type. If you have the area, it is best to plant a multi-species and multi-row combination of species.

Do you want to have to top your shelterbelt every year? Don't choose leylandii or macrocarpa if you don't want this annual maintenance job!

Which natives? We favour mostly locally-grown natives as being the most hardy and best adapted for our Southland situations of strong winds, frost or full sun (with appropriate species for wet or dry soils).

Other roles a native shelterbelt can fulfil include:

- Providing dense shelter from ground-level upwards.
- Looking attractive, with a variety of textures, colours, shapes and heights.
- Providing habitat for wildlife and attracting native birds. Once established, your wide shelterbelt becomes a forest in its own right.
- Native shelterbelts are also largely maintenance free once they have been established. They won't need topping if you choose the right species.

Think about putting up a windbreak to help your initial plantings.

Once you have established shelter on your perimeters then you can look at planting orchard trees, flower gardens and other specialised planting areas. But shelter comes first as most of those other species will suffer without it and why



*A well established shelter belt with trees from the Community Nursery.*

not also make the shelter an attractive area for native plants and wildlife too?

To cater for demand we will be growing our recommended shelter species for our usual \$5 a plant in PB3 size pots to be ready for planting in November, so come and see us before then with any requirements or questions.

There are profile drawings and species lists on our website so check it out at:

[www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/restoring-your-patch/planning-your-project/shelterbelts/](http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/restoring-your-patch/planning-your-project/shelterbelts/)

Or come and talk to us at the Southland Community Nursery down Grant Road. Email us first at [rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz](mailto:rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz) or come along on a volunteer Friday morning with your questions.

*Chris and Brian Rance.*

[www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz](http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz)



# ENTHUSIASM AND MAHI



## Otatara school's keen young environmentalists

Term One 2025 saw the connections between Otatara School, the Southland Community Nursery and the Otatara Landcare Group continue to grow.

At the beginning of March, I started as kaiako (teacher) three days a week at Otatara School, continuing my association with the school from our children's school days and also working as an environmental educator with the Southland Community Nursery.

Later in March it was great to have the Southland Community Nursery open once again for Otatara School.

Bug building, seed and leaf identifying, who lives where?, nature art, nature wondering and learning about animal pests were the activities that a group of year three and four students from Otatara School experienced, spending a morning of their outdoor week at the Southland Community Nursery.

Viewing the pond, exploring the restored forest and estimating how many plants the

nursery produces in a year rounded off the visit.

The looking, noticing, wondering, and investigation nature of the visit highlighted the connection between the school and this local place in our wider community.

The enthusiasm and the mahi that the school, the Landcare Group and the Southland Community Nursery groups do in and for the environment is evidence of how wonderful these communities are.

Along with tree removal and fencing work last year and over the summer at the school, the Bushy Point restoration planting site turning 25 this year, and the amazing place that is Otatara, these community connections make for an exciting year – watch this space!

*Bronwyn Graham*

*Teacher – Environmental Education Specialist  
Otatara School*

*Right, Otatara School's young environmentalists in the education centre at the Southland Community Nursery in Grant Road.*





# GROWING OUR COMMUNITY



By Linda

## Future Proofing



20 years since I've lived around Otatara, joined the local Community Nursery & the Otatara Landcare Group as a volunteer, then as a committee member.

I've been involved mainly in growing & caring for the plants now well established throughout Bushy Pt, a beautiful park accessed through Bryson Rd, open to everyone & improving every year.



Committee members organise regular plantings, weed control & maintenance, host community & school groups, monitor trap lines & provide pest control advice, install information panels & signage, seating, keep tracks open, care for injured kereru & submit funding applications to establish & maintain all of the above, plus publish & distribute this publication 'The Pigeon Post'. Most committee members have served 20 years+ & some fresh faces joining us would be greatly welcomed.



Bushy Pt has great walking tracks, views & a range of habitats for a wide variety of flora & fauna & is very accessible for all ages, right on our beautiful neighbourhood boundary. Get yourselves involved.

L April '25

# HELPING RESTORE NATURE



## Planting — and digging — for the future

As the Otatara Landcare Group turns 25 this year, it's been a time for all of us who have been involved from the beginning to reflect a bit on what we've done over that time or what has changed.

At our own place, which adjoins Bushy Point, we have been running the Community Nursery all that time and more. Encouragingly, it still seems as popular as in the early days and we are probably getting more volunteers on Fridays than ever.

As subdivisions spring up everywhere in Otatara, including opposite us, we hope that more and more native plants will go into gardens, providing environments for the native birds we all love to prosper.

Certainly, a lot more people are trapping pests on their own properties to supplement the Bushy Point area, Otatara South scenic reserve and other ICC Reserves where Pest-busters are active. I am always heartened to come back to Otatara from most other places in New Zealand and find the birdsong prolific, better than almost anywhere.

We have fernbirds visiting our restoration area, around the ponds and even into the garden and the bellbirds, tui and kereru seem to be thriving. Douglas and Kathy took over from Russell and May to make sure that, if injured, the native birds get the best of care at Bush Haven and are released back into our precious environment.

We have our own restoration area at about the same stage as

Bushy Point and we are now, 25 years later, seeing nature starting to take over. We have created the sheltered environment where the 'big trees', kahikatea, pokaka, matai, miro and totara, can thrive in a protected environment – safe from the effects of frosts, full sun and wind that prevents or slows their growth in the open.

Having now completed our paddock restoration to protect the old growth kahikatea on our property, we are not stopping there. We have just recently excavated a new pond in our one remaining paddock which adjoins the restoration area



*Above, the paddock before the excavation of the new pond (drone photo Jason Hosking: [jason@jasonhosking.com](mailto:jason@jasonhosking.com) )*

*Right, excavated and beginning to fill.*





and is visible from the Education Centre. It will be a great place to again learn about pond creation and restoration, from the beginning.

Although lots of things have changed over the last 25 years we still maintain that there is no 'quick fix' to restoring nature, it all takes time. But it is also very rewarding and we can see that at both Bushy Point and on our own place.

Although we might never see the tall kahikatea forest we have started planting dominating the site in our lifetimes, we have the pleasure and benefit right now of living within a beautiful na-

tive area with its dynamic and thriving plants, birds, insects, frogs and lizards. It is all very good for the soul.

If you want to transform your area or protect what you already have, there are lots of resources on our website: [www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/](http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/) and we are always available and willing to give advice for free, not to mention selling you some local native plants.

*Chris and Brian Rance*

## Bushy Point 25th Celebration

### Saturday 18 October 2025

Yes, that's how long the Otatara Landcare Group has been looking after Bushy Point – fundraising, restoration planting, pond creation, tree releasing, track making, weed control, interpretation signs, picnic areas.

The OLG is a voluntary organisation and yet has managed to plant 37,000 locally-sourced native plants, clocked up over 20,000 volunteer hours, intensively managed 90 hectares of animal pest control and much much more.

This year at Bushy Point on Saturday 18th October we are planning a big celebration, with a BBQ at the pond area where we achieved our milestone of joining up the totara forest on sand dunes with the kahikatea swamp forest.

We want as many people who have been involved over those 25 years to come along and help, but also to see how much has been achieved.

We also want to celebrate the many hours of work our Bushy Point Caretaker, Barry Smith, has done over those years. Although

Barry officially 'retired' this year from that role, we know that he is committed to this project for life (as many of us are!) and so you will still see Barry around, doing good stuff, I am sure.

More details on the Bushy Point Celebration Day will be sent out but please put the date in your diary today – Saturday 18th October 2025.

*Chris Rance*

### **Life membership for only \$50!**

**Becoming a Life Member of the Otatara Landcare Group costs only \$50, and will help OLG continue it's important work for this community and our wonderful environment. This is exceptional value!**

**Details about joining as a Life Member are on page 19.**



## Kathy's first bird kiss!

There is something special about every single bird that comes into our care and this last few months we have been utterly privileged to have had the company, and lessons learned in different ways, from two kereru: Motupohue from Bluff, and Kowhai, a local Otatara bird.

An x-ray showed that Motu had a broken coracoid which is an essential piece of the rigid pectoral girdle which enables a bird to fly. If that collarbone is not too badly broken and displaced it can mend with some luck and care.

Our vet Lisa at VetSouth gave him a slim chance of recovering and thus began a prolonged period of intensive care for what had been a vigorous, strong bird.

They know themselves and keep very still as needed, even when maybe bored witless because they can't pick up a book or enjoy visitors of their own kind. We didn't even have other injured kereru during his time with us. He did seem to enjoy soft tuneful music like Mike Oldfield. Or maybe he just had to put up with it because we love him.

He 'hooped' when certain foods appeared in his bowl, especially bananas and cooked carrot. But by Christmas he had a real liking for strawberries. In fact, he seemed to know that they were a special treat along with the repositioning of his inside cage to catch the sun more. The day came for his check up at the vets to see if the coracoid had mended.

So, the night before, we had music and strawberries which he cleaned up followed by a very early breakfast of what had become his next favourite food: pineapple. It had to be early to allow for the food to digest before his anaesthetic.

He knew and I knew we were saying "goodbye" when I passed his box to the nurse at reception and said "Ata marie Motu!". While we waited for Lisa the vet to phone us, Douglas and I were having a coffee next to our friend Ben in Langlands. My phone rang and I braced for the



*Motupohue*

'bad' news. "I'm sorry Kathy but.....". A tear began to slide down my cheek just as over the hotel music system a singer repeated these words in his gentle song, "Let me go now, let me go now ....." And we smiled happily with one huge "yes!" He had done so well.

Kowhai was delivered to us that same day by Dallas, and I thought how perfect the timing was because she would have given Motu pause when he actually wanted to go.

We named Kowhai after the most delicate looking native tree but from our experience as island dwellers, also extremely hardy and a great survivor. She, a juvenile kereru, was found starving on the ground, had no visible breaks on x-ray, but absolutely no muscle tone in her shoulders as if she had never really flown before.

So she had a far less restricted regime in an outside cage where she could begin to hop around as she gained condition. She was brought inside every night and snuggled up on a heat pad and soft blanket as if "Phew! Exercise over for the day."

Her weight gain was good, and her exercise certainly strengthened up her legs and balance,

*Continued on next page*





but we couldn't take her to the flight cage as she would just tumble and not get up. So began a programme of teaching a bird to fly.

I used the prop pole from our clothesline, which she now had enough balance to hold on to as I walked her around the garden. I held it about a metre off the ground to start with and it excited her enough to know that she could launch off it after a few turns around the garden.

She literally jumped the first few times with no wing movement at all and then made to rush for cover until the stick appeared at her feet and she hopped on again, so relieved to be off the ground. Daily she developed the strength and idea of using her wings even just to assist her hopping up branches to regard me from a superior height. But she was stuck there unless the stick appeared, and she jumped on again for more circuits of the training ground.

Then she began to fly a short distance down to the ground or across and slightly down to the favourite tree, a kowhai. I could begin to hold the stick level with a kowhai branch and then slightly

*Kathy's first bird kiss, from Kowhai.*



below it until one day she actually flew up a little, becoming so excited that she lost her balance and I was lucky to catch her on the stick just in time.

But she had tasted her true bird self and progressed enough to go to the flight cage where she could fly to eat tree lucerne and wineberries and other food with which Gretchen supplied her. She knew the drill was to now really build up her flight muscles.

Nearly a fortnight later she signalled her readiness to go by standing at the far end of the large cage looking at the release hatch. When we brought her back to be banded and then released, she "hooded" away vigorously, happy to see us again but then got quite miffed when we put her back into her outside cage waiting for Pete to come and band her before we let her go.

Unfortunately, the weather was about to turn dire that evening and there was no way she could be sent off into such a storm. She got the pip and hopped to the other end of the cage and turned her back on me. I got it....

She spent that last night of captivity inside on the heat pad and blankets safe and warm while the storm raged outside. Next morning Dallas and Janice came to see her released after her quite lengthy stay. She stood on my hand ready to fly off - but before she did, turned and hopped up my arm onto my chest, tucked under my chin and then reached up and pecked gently at my lips.

I had been bird kissed for the very first time; maybe forgiven for holding her back, maybe thanked for the stick work, or sorry she got the pip...who knows, although I had seen very young kereru doing that same thing with another kereru, maybe a parent.

Then she hopped on to my shoulder and flew up into the native beech. Once she'd got her bearings she headed back towards where she'd been found on Marama Ave.

But .....jeepers... how unutterably sweet.  
*Kathy Morrison*





# ARE YOU IN

If you are, then come and share

This panel was prepared in 2019, and many of those photographed here will still be in Otatara, if a little bit older! Have a look and if you are pictured, a great reason to share in the 25th anniversary celebrations at Bushy Point on Saturday October 18! The colour version is on the OLG website.

## Bushy Point

GROWING FORESTS AND C

**ARE YOU ON HERE?**  
Let us know!

**You can help! Find out**

Photos by Dawn Patterson, Chris Duggan, Jason Hosking.

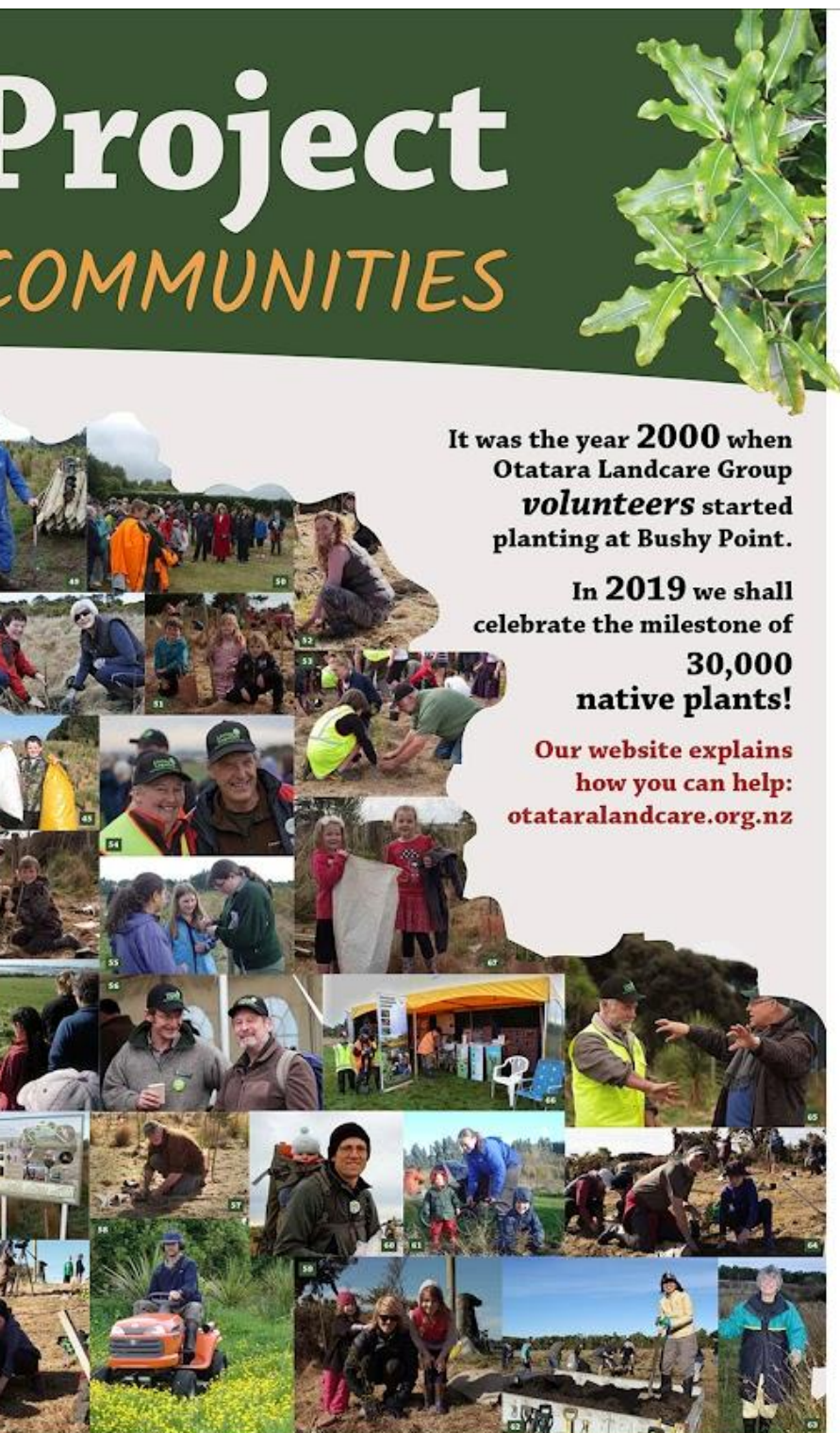


# THIS PICTURE?



in the 25th celebrations!

By 2019, 30,000 native plants and trees had been planted. In May this year, the 37,000th planting was made. Since 2000, volunteers have given an astonishing total of 21,000 hours of work on the Bushy Point project, and work continues. Without this, the restoration would have been impossible!



## BUSHY POINT BEFORE & AFTER



how at [www.otataralandcare.org.nz](http://www.otataralandcare.org.nz)

Otatara Landcare 2019



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# SILVER JUBILEE

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## Barry Smith tells the 25 year story of the OLG and Bushy Point

### OTATARA LANDCARE GROUP SILVER JUBILEE 5th May 2000 ~ 5th May 2025

‘The long and winding road...’ So began the 1970 recording of the 20th and last Beatles song to be released as a single in the United States. One could almost say that the last Beatles song was a forerunner to the journey that the Otatara Community started nearly 30 years later in 1999.

Our journey really began during the Mayorship of David Harrington when a discussion arose about removing the Reserve status from Bluff Hill and Sandy Point and placing the care of these two areas into the newly formed Forestry Company owned by the ICC.

A fiery submissions process at the City Council Chambers eventually saw the City back down and (to their credit) they employed Dr David Norton to do an analysis of the natural vegetation of the Otatara and Sandy Point areas.

His report stated just how special the place was, as being one of only two areas left in the country where there was a predominance of podocarp forest on sand dunes. One of his recommendations was to connect the southern and northern areas of forest in Bushy Point to provide a corridor for native birds to travel and feed.

With this in mind it was towards the end of 1999 that a group of us got together to plan the inauguration of a local Community Care Group. Invitations were sent out to everyone we thought might be interested, including the Chair of Environment Southland and the Mayor of Invercargill,

Tim Shadbolt. The Otatara Community Centre had quite a crowd on that night and it was decided to form the Otatara Landcare Group, following in the wake of the Makarewa River Care Group and the Aparima Estuary Care Group.

We were, I believe, the third such group to be formed in Southland and the only one of the three groups still active. The Makarewa Group fires up every now and again when an issue arises and the Aparima Group became the South Coast Environment Centre, focusing on a slightly different aspect of the environment.

The two main things we started with in the way of projects was, firstly, to get registered as an Incorporated Society, and this was duly completed on the 5th May 2000. The second thing was a project. We wanted to start to replant an area of rank wild English grasses in the Southern Bushy Point block.

With the Southland Community Nursery recently up and running we potted up a lot of trees for our projected plantings in 2000. Using what

*Below, the first plantings at Bushy Point, 25 years ago.*







we had at home, I used my Nylex Gardina five litre sprayer and sprayed off the long grass.

When this died I mowed it with a very old ride-on mower and during two days of planting we achieved what we set out to do - 2000 in 2000. That is, plant 2000 trees in the year 2000.

One of the other early projects we had was working with the Otatara school and kindergarten to plant native trees around the newly established Otatara Community Centre. Next time you are there, have a look around the car park. Those fringe trees were planted by those school and kindergarten children all those years ago.

Around 2003 people could start to see we meant business. At one stage we had a wee chat to the Otatara Community Board about our objectives as there was some conflict in what each group perceived as the right direction of development for the Otatara area.

In spite of this we got on reasonably well until the Otatara Community Board was dismantled by the City Council. It was replaced by the Otatara Community Group for a short period of time until it too folded, leaving just ourselves to hold

up the values of Otatara against whatever local government might throw at it.

Also at this time we went into discussions with the Department of Conservation about holding a concession to plant out 14.9ha of grazing area, and around 2004 we were granted a 30 year concession with a 30 year right of renewal, and away we went.

The concession allowed us to graze sheep and horses. The sheep never did well but we have managed to have a long-term arrangement for the grazing of two horses.

With the sheep gone we now sell the excess grass to dairy farmers who need really poor quality hay/bailage to dry off cows. Our stuff fills their bellies but since there isn't much nutrient it assists in drying off the milk production.

Whilst getting funding these days can prove time consuming and sometimes problematical, back then it was a real challenge. We had no background, no mana, so funders were a little reluctant to part with monies, but we did manage to score \$500 from the Community Trust of Southland for fencing.

We settled into a routine—we were planting 1000 native trees a year, about what we could manage. We had the pond dug in 2006 and by 2010 had planted an area halfway across

to joining up the two patches of bush noted in Dr Norton's report. We had an area of about 1.2ha fenced off we were going to plant out over the following six years to complete that first link of the forest connection.

Then our plans were disrupted in the best way possible. The Rugby World cup arrived in

*The same view today. Drone photo courtesy of Jason Hosking. (jason@jasonhosking.com )*



*Continued overpage*



New Zealand in 2011. Some areas made a hue and cry about the amount of carbon that was going to be blasted into the atmosphere because of all this travel.

The result was that Meridian Energy, The Tindall Foundation, DOC and a couple of other groups got on board, to plant thousands of trees. Seventeen sites around the country were to be selected, all on DOC Land, and all in or close to centres that hosted a world cup game. Each centre was to have a Living Legend attached to the project. Bushy Point was the local project chosen and our Living Legend was All Black No: 611, Kevin Laidlaw, originally from Nightcaps and then living in Invercargill.

For 2011 we'd already grown 1,000 trees to be planted out. The 'Living Legends' Project, as it was termed, was to give us 5,000 trees the first year and 2,500 in each of the second and third years. We cringed a bit! How would we get enough people to plant all these in one day?

When 60 turned up for the Auckland project we got really worried. We needn't have, because some 280 people turned up at Bushy Point and the whole 6000 trees got planted in about one and a half hours.

Some of the 17 projects finished early and we ended up with 3500 trees in the third year and an additional \$5000 a year in funding for the three years after that.

As of 2025 the forest link that Dr Norton had envisaged is now a flourishing forest into which now and again we intersperse a few podocarp species like totara, kahikatea, miro and mahoe.

After the Living Legends project finished, Kevin Laidlaw and his wife Maymie continued being

part of Bushy Point's planting days, the only one of the seventeen Living Legends to do so. This is not surprising because this is Southland.

Sadly, Maymie passed away on 7th January 2020 and Kevin on 30th July 2024. As with all the special people that have worked with the project, a totara tree was planted to honour their work and commitment. We have had a really good team of people working on the Bushy Point project over the years.

With the 5th of May 2025 being our Silver Jubilee date, I got an additional 210 plants in the ground in April and early May, bringing the total planted on our project to 36,975 so that on the day of our anniversary a small group of us planted 25 totara to bring our total plantings up to 37,000 trees. Oddly enough, just a few days before that we reached another milestone, that of having spent 21,000 hours on the project.

The real celebration of our Silver Jubilee will be in October when we complete a smaller planting as we are, for some funny reason, getting older and more tired.

Some of our original members have passed on or moved on. Of the original Committee there are but five of us left: Brian and Chris Rance, Lloyd Esler, Cathie McFie and myself. We started at a time when many of us were parents of small children. We are now grandparents and they now have small children.

*Right, done! The 37,000th totara tree planted at Bushy Point. From left, Richard Johnson, Barry Smith and Graeme Dobbs.*





# RATS DAMAGE HOUSES



## A reminder from Predator Free NZ

I had a thought-provoking chat with the provider of our heat pump recently, due to a bottom vent making a knocking noise as it opened and closed. “Otatarā has the most issues with mice getting into indoor heat pump units and causing damage,” he said.



I hoped our unit had not been destroyed by a mouse, as we bait and trap — and it turned out it had not! But it made me think, and so thanks to Dallas who heads up Otatarā Pestbusters for this article, from Predator Free NZ. *Editor*

Unless he’s an animated mouse in a red shirt named Stuart or Remy cooking ratatouille in the kitchen, it’s in everyone’s best interest to prevent rodents from coming inside.

Owen Stobart from Aces Pest Control in Auckland says rodent damage can vary from minor to potentially lethal. No matter the scale, it’s usually costly to fix.

When cold weather pushes rats and mice indoors, infestations happen. Rodents cause damage by chewing through wiring, timber, insulation, and pipes. The bad news? Most insurers won’t cover the costly repairs. The good news? You can prevent it.

Minor damage caused by rodents can initially go unnoticed but will worsen over time. The insulation under houses and in walls or ceilings is a perfect nesting ground for rodents – once they rip it to shreds, that is. “This often results in the insulation being pulled down, so it no longer warms your home effectively,” says Owen. Rats’ incisors grow several inches a year, so they chew on materials to grind them down to stay pain-free.

Some rodents will perform DIY dentistry on live 240-volt wires. That’s right, the rodent will chew down to the bare copper, get a 240-volt shock, and then do it again...and again, creating

a hazardous fire risk and power outages. “I find myself looking at all these bare, exposed copper wires, shaking my head.” Owen says he has seen hundreds of thousands of dollars of damage from rodents. The Insurance Council of New Zealand notes that rodent and vermin damage is ‘typically excluded under most standard house-

hold and motor policies’. Check their consumer guide for more details, he says.

Owen adds that rats carry diseases, reminding us that rodent control protects not only our wallets but also our health.

### How to smell a rat

The most common rat in Aotearoa is the ship rat, which will most likely be heard before they’re seen. Keep an ear out for scuttling noises above you, this may be the only sign you’ll get as these rats are very shy and “will do anything not to meet you or your family”.

Owen says the second most common sign is rat scat in the attic, so it wouldn’t hurt to check for this occasionally, too.

*Otatarā Pestbusters supplies, traps, bait stations and bait at very reasonable prices. Contact Dallas Bradley on 021 784962 for assistance. For more information, check out the Otatarā Pestbusters Facebook page or the Otatarā Landcare Group website.*



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# THE KIWISKIPS STORY

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## Sustainability focus for Otatara couple who had an idea...

Otatara couple Dan and Kereana Butterfield have gained national prominence since their business, Kiwiskips, won the 'Environmental Leadership and Innovation in Business' category of Environment Southland's 2024 Community Awards. The award was for innovative waste management practices that significantly reduce landfill contributions.

Otatara Landcare Group won the 'Environmental Action in the Community' category at the same awards evening, which is when the Otatara connection with Dan and Kereana was made.

There is a great story behind Kiwiskips. It came out of a near disaster, when Dan received an order in his previous business, South Engineering, from a local waste company for 40 skips.

They were made up in under two weeks but when he called the company to say they were ready for collection, he was told they did not want them anymore.

The cost outlay had been huge, in steel and labour. At the same time as the order was declined, the invoice for the steel arrived. Unable to find a market for 40 new skips and deep in crisis, Dan had a lightbulb moment. "Let's buy a truck and start hiring out skips!"

A second-hand skip truck was found on Trade Me in Auckland, which was bought, and Dan and his brother Jason flew up and drove it to Invercargill non-stop. The same day they got the truck to Invercargill, an order for four skips came through, which were promptly delivered.

Since then, the business has flourished and expanded, and now has five skip trucks, two wheelie bin trucks, one hydro excavation truck, two liquid waste vacuum trucks, one hiab truck, one hook truck for the largest skip size, a front-loader rubbish truck and a dedicated tyre collection truck.

Dan and Kereana employ 14 people, and fast and friendly and efficient service to customers is

at the heart of Kiwiskips, says Dan. Reflecting this ethos, they do not have truck drivers, they have customer service people who are encouraged to go the extra mile for customers when needed.

While they accept all forms of waste such as household waste, green waste, old appliances and scrap metal, all building site waste including bricks and concrete requires a separate skip.

The reason for this says Dan is that Kiwiskips main focus is taking as much construction waste as possible out of the waste stream, and recycling it. "The main things we are trying to divert from landfill are construction and demolition waste and all of that we pull out of the skips to recycle and on-sell".

"We are not just a waste company, we are a recycling company. Waste is not waste – it's a resource in the wrong place". Construction waste such as bricks and concrete is crushed into builder's fill and wood is chipped and shredded into animal bedding or furnace fuel.

In the six months since winning the Environment Southland award Kiwiskips have partnered with Treadlite, a national tyre recycler, through the Tyrewise scheme which was formed to prevent millions of tyres ending up landfill, being illegally stockpiled or dumped each year.

Tyrewise is Aotearoa's first regulated product stewardship scheme, which tracks tyres via a network of registered participants, throughout their life cycle, to ensure tyres are recycled and repurposed into other useful products.

"We were also contacted after the awards evening by flat glass recyclers 5R Solutions, a national flat glass recycling company, and now we have a dedicated hub for flat glass, which goes through to 5R Solutions Christchurch to be recycled".

The links with Tyrewise and 5RSolutions all flowed from the publicity Kiwiskips received from winning the Environment Southland award.





“The award gave our vision real credibility to change how waste is perceived. Building awareness about this something we truly believe in”, says Dan.

Kereana and Dan live close to Bushy Point, and they and their daughter Mackenzie enjoy the walks, birdlife, estuary views, pond and bush of the area.

## OTHER AWARDS

Kiwiskips has won several awards in the last two years, in addition to the Environment Southland award. They are:

- 2023 Southland Business Excellence Awards—The SIT | Te Pūkenga Excellence in Trades Industries Award, for outstanding performance in trade services within Southland.
- 2024 WasteMINZ Awards for Excellence - Waste and Resource Recovery Young Professional of the Year: Awarded to Daniel Butterfield for his leadership in sustainable waste management.

*Above, Dan, Kereana and Mackenzie, with some of Kiwiskips’ fleet of trucks. In the front is Mackenzie’s electric working model of a skip truck, built by Dan.*

- 2023 Xero Beautiful Business Fund - Innovating for Sustainability: Received a grant as one of four New Zealand winners, highlighting efforts in recycling and sustainability.
- 2023 KUMA Southern Māori Business Awards, Highly Commended – He Tohu Manaakitanga Customer Excellence Award: Recognized for exceptional customer service

# GROWING IN CONTAINERS



By Sue Johnson

There are many reasons for growing in containers but the most important being they enhance the look of your garden. There is a huge selection available from plastic, ceramics and terracotta to even the use of obsolete household items!

Careful grouping of pots will create an impact - a hodgepodge of random plants in containers can look a bit messy as can empty pots or those containing dead plants!

Pots can be grouped by style and colour to give the curated look. Sometimes it is the selection of plant types that can pull a display together. An example could be a succulent collection in similar terracotta pots, or for a more formal effect, maybe some topiaries in matching pots. The latter can create a stunning entrance way in a formal setting.

There are often areas in the garden in which plants fail to thrive – under trees or areas close to the house where soil can be dry and hard. These are ideal positions for plants in containers, which can be placed on pebbles to tidy the display.

During winter, a container of pansies or primula by the front door can be a very cheerful, bright splash of colour when there is generally not much colour around.

When selecting pots, think of the style you wish to portray. If your house is modern, pots with straight or round shapes would be ideal. Avoid the more curvy type of classic pots, which you would expect to see in an English-style garden.

Plant selection is important too. Some plants are better than others as a subject for planting in a pot. Keep your eyes open as to what you may see in other gardens or ask an expert to help you select something suitable.

On decks, pots will need saucers to protect the wood. It is possible to buy pot feet, which keep the pot and saucer off the deck or ground and can look elegant.

The planting medium used in pots should relate to the use. If planting a quick splash of colour, basic potting mix will do, but for more long-term planting, a better quality mix will give a better result.

The relative size of the plant to the pot should be considered. The ideal would be a plant one and a half times the size of the pot.

Veggies are frequently grown in containers, as this suits the smaller garden. Veggies are heavy feeders and if grown in pots, need regular feeding. Generally, liquid fertilisers are best for pots – it provides a nice, even concentration of nutrients.

Make sure you choose a container with holes in the bottom. It is essential that excess water can drain away and nutrients flush through.

*Below, a good display of containers with a pleasing variety of plants.*





# Otatara Landcare Group Membership



If you are not already a member and would like to help support the work of the Otatara Landcare Group, just fill in the form below and come and join us. We appreciate all our members both for their contributions of time and financial support. We can't do it without you.

## Membership Form

Please complete form for membership or if you require a receipt for any donation and email to [otataralg@gmail.com](mailto:otataralg@gmail.com).

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☐ I give permission for my contact details to be retained exclusively for the purposes of communication in relation to the activities of Otatara Landcare Group.

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