



Weedbusters!

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Northland Weedbusters Newsletter

Northland
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In this issue:

NZ Historic Places Trust tackle privet at Edmonds Ruins

Restoring the forest at Mangonui's Rangikapiti Pa

Mickey mouse plant on the loose

Owen Mitchell hunts for bat-wing passion-flower in Kamo

Hodges Park Weedbuster keen to see Tradescantia leaf beetle

Plant Me Instead booklet launch

Weedbusters 2-minute film challenge

Hot tips

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Working together
to protect New Zealand



From left: Mita Harris, Ester Horton, John Comely

The Edmonds Ruins are a special place - and a retired Kerikeri couple's labour of love has inspired a fresh vision for the land surrounding the area. The couple were the recipients of a Weedbusters Award in 2008. It's no surprise they are delighted the adjacent tree privet forest is now a target for NZ Historic Places Trust weed contractors. This massive area of privet has to be seen to be believed, and will be source of much local bird-spreading of the plant.

Mita Harris of the NZ Historic Places Trust says, "Land between the reserve and Edmonds Ruins is currently over-run with privet, but - if rid of it - there is a potential for the reserve to be expanded." Mr Harris is planning an informal catch-up BBQ with locals on-site to talk over options and future management. That's good news to John Comely. "Local people want to get rid of the privet," he says. "We've received occasional

funding from the council but we've carried most of the cost of the work on the reserve. It would be good to be able to explore other options".

Ester Horton grew up in the area and has tangata whenua links to the land. She is excited about the potential to get more work done. She says this is an important place to Maori, and she would like to see more of the community playing a role. The ruins, made with local basalt boulder stone show the remains of the stone cottage and outbuildings built by John Edmonds around 1840, and bring the community past into the present with family memories such as Ester's.

Over the past 10 years, John Comely and his wife Elizabeth have transformed almost an acre of the unprepossessing Council land at the entrance of Edmonds Ruins into a reserve featuring a range of native trees and plants - largely at their own expense. Privet removal will be hugely beneficial.

Restoring the Forest at Mangonui's Rangikapiti Pa

The Friends of Rangikapiti Reserve Society Incorporated (FORRSI) was formed in partnership with DOC and local Iwi. Their aim is to remove weeds and plant native trees. The project will take 15 years and \$90,000 to turn around 34 hectares of forest from a state of decline.

Thanks to the generosity of sponsors, contract sprayers are now at work on the site and making very good progress with *Asparagus scandens* - climbing asparagus.

The forest on Rangikapiti Reserve is on the verge of collapsing. Birds spread the sweet red berries of *A. scandens*, which has resulted in the weed smothering the understory next generation of trees.

When mature manuka and kanuka eventually die on Rangikapiti there will only be weeds unless *A. scandens* is brought under control.

Treatment: Young *Asparagus scandens* plants are removed by pulling out roots and all; larger plants require spraying with a mild solution of Roundup. This may have to be continued for two or three years to kill the dense root mat. Stronger solutions burn the leaves before it is transported to the roots. Other weeds of focus at the site are *Cotoneaster*, bone seed, woolley nightshade, monkey apple and pampas.



Climbing asparagus work at Rangikapiti Pa

Mickey mouse plant



Mickey mouse plant. Photo courtesy of A J Townsend

Department of Conservation staff recently found Mickey mouse plant *Ochna serrelata* seedlings at Rangikapiti Pa. The hunt is on for the adult, likely to be in a local garden, feeding the birds, spreading this hardy weed into the adjacent Rangikapiti Pa forest.

Mickey mouse plant is a pretty ornamental South African shrub, turned forest weed in NZ. It's not an easy plant to kill and though not yet widespread or roadside, it is definitely moving out of Northland gardens and into forests via birds in populated areas like Whangarei and Mangonui.

It grows to two metres high. The leaves are bronze to a glossy green and elliptic in shape (13-50mm actual size) with finely serrated edges. A speckled gritty stem and yellow spring flowers as well as red sepals on fruit are typical.

The petals, and green to black berries are in sets of five, and summer berries are surrounded by showy festive red fleshy sepals.

Treatment: larger plants can be cut close to base, 50mm, then stump-swabbed with 3.3 % Grazon on stump, very soon (< 1 minute) after cutting. Small plants, seedlings and dense groups of regeneration require a foliage spray with 3.3% Grazon.

Owen Mitchell hunts for bat-wing passionflower in Kamo

Mitchell has been tirelessly working in the Elgin Place reserve in Kamo for many years. His work includes revegetation work, pest plant control and some possum control. Although both the Whangarei District Council and the Northland Regional Council assist with some funding and materials, Owen has largely funded his activities on his own, including growing plants for re-veg in his home nursery.

One of the plants Owen has an interest in is the new pest plant batwing passionflower. This plant has gained a foothold in the Fairway Drive area of Kamo. Ross Johnston of Northland Regional Council says "Owen has been invaluable to the project, both in the destruction of plants he finds, and the reporting back of this work to NRC".

Hodges Park Weedbuster

Victor Binkowski is the WDC Weedbuster making a difference in Kamo at Hodges Park.

Well-used even on weekday mornings, this is a beautiful urban park, with a stream, a mix of native and exotic trees, areas of mown grass, full sun, shaded paths, and a huge totara tree as a centre piece. It also has more than its fair share of *Tradescantia* or wandering willi.

Victor eagerly waits for the day the *Tradescantia* leaf beetle biocontrol agent makes it to Kamo. The beetle is being promoted and a new weeding tool hopefully will soon be available for Weedbusters like Victor.

He says, "Large amounts of the *Tradescantia* are regularly washed downstream towards Hatea River in floods and the re-growth is prolific".

Victor, now retired, has a background in horticulture and landscaping. He's involved with the Quarry Garden's nursery, and Weedbusting in Hodges Park.

His target weeds include *Tradescantia*, mignonette vine tuber persistent re-growth, and Taiwan cherry seedlings.

Steve Pallant of the Whangarei District Council Parks Division says, "Victor has made a significant contribution to pest plant management at the Hodges site".

Keen to see Tradescantia leaf beetle



Victor Binkowski with weed seedlings, under forest canopy Hatea River walk

Plant Me Instead launches this winter!

Get your copy of the Northland book at a launch event near you call Gina 094703300 for more info!



Hot tips from Evan at DOC Kaitiaki:

Empty Gel applicator bottles can be purchased from Fruited Supplies. There are 2 types: Brown \$3.68 each and White \$2.45 each – just like the vigilant ones

Biological controls - for more information on check out <http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/publications/newsletters>

2-minute film challenge 2011 first year 1-8 students with a \$1000 prize for schools. Sign up at www.weedbusters.org.nz - get creative, learn heaps, and help save the environment!

Weed bags are great for onsite composting. Designed for *Tradescantia* they can also handle chopped kahili ginger rhizomes. Just leave the bag in the shade at your weed site and refill on the spot with new weeds for composting as you go. The bags will last about 6 years in the shade - large bags 3m x 1.8 m costs \$40 and small bags 1.5 x 1.8m \$30. Order from the Weed Free Trust info@weedfree.org.nz.

Plant Spotters! Watch out for giant *Tradescantia*! This plant has been collected from Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Wellington. Genetic tests have found it to be distinct from our average wandering willie. Distribution is not extensive and any site identified in Northland will be of great interest. If you think you have found some get in touch with Gina at gwilliams@doc.govt.nz 09 470 3331, and a sample can be sent off to Peter Heenan at the Allan herbarium, Maanaki Whenua - Landcare Research for analysis. Peter is interested in very small or very large *Tradescantia*, collected with site GPS coordinates, collector's name, date, and to avoid rotting posted pronto in damp newspaper and this in a plastic bag.

