

## **Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust**

### **Maungatautari Planting/Weeding Team**

Some 4 years ago, after attending various meetings involving Maungatautari mountain and the amazing idea of fencing it and killing off all the predators! – I found I wasn't cut out for sitting at meetings. I'd rather be hands on and busy.

So I wrote a polite note saying that if a job came along I could do then I'd be very interested. It wasn't long before David Wallace rang me to ask if I'd lead the Planting Team. So I pulled in every capable person I could find and asked for more at the Garden Club.

We started out with about 25 members. Elaine was one of those persons. She now has a good grasp of what's to happen with the potting up at The Barn.

The job of the Planting Team was to plant up all the yellowy clay banks and areas where the diggers had scoured out the forest floor for tracks in the 2 enclosures.

We collected many seedlings from nearby and some were taken to be potted on. We had a wee nursery in the Southern Enclosure where we were able to leave many seedlings awaiting planting.

Since then volunteers have come from near and far wanting to join us in our work. Now we have 70 on the list. Some volunteers source seedlings and pot them on. Some collect seeds and help set them into seed trays to watch them grow. Some have a more active roll of planting on the mountain and in the summer time when it's too hot, become the Weeding Team!

**As Team Leader** I have learnt that it's essential you learn what can and what can't be done by all the various volunteers. In saying that, we have 3 volunteers who are over 85 and all have prosthetic knees or hips, etc. They are out there every day we do work on the mountain – and then some! It's impossible to keep them away!

**So it's essential to know your volunteers capabilities.**

**COMMUNICATION is the way we stick together.**

Communication is what motivates us all. We now all communicate with each other – especially people living in the same district. They usually arrange carpooling.

**It's quite simple – we all support each other, coz it's a team!**

When we meet, we then discuss the jobs for the coming weeks. That way everyone knows what's to happen next.

Then we check the tv weather forecast on Sunday evenings – that's for the whole week. I then simply ring up one person from each area and we decide what, where and when and they then ring around the persons in their area. And so on. I never really know how many people are coming, but you can get a good idea from the previous week.

We usually work for 3 – 4 hours, 1 or 2 days each week.

We have a short team brief before we commence – especially if there's new volunteers with us. Everyone is told what tools to bring and what work it will be used for. The new volunteers are told what to wear. There's nothing worse than someone turning up in Jandals!

Afterwards I always thank the volunteers for their effort, before they depart. Sometimes I ring them at home if I've sensed something might be not quite right. Could be too slippery or steep slope – maybe can't pull out weeds with weak shoulders, etc.

Volunteers are a **V** aluable asset  
they are often **O** utgoing and offer themselves for work  
they **L** earn quickly – have lateral thinking and initiative – probably from  
past experiences  
they're **U** npaid and undervalued!  
they're **N** ice people – happy and compassionate about their work  
they need **T** hanks for what they do – it's the only 'payment' they get  
they can do **E** nergetic activities – and some need encouragement to take further  
steps  
they have **E** xpertise – often retired and can call on past knowledge.  
and **ALL VOLUNTEERS** need to be  
**R** espected for their work and age and ability  
And the last one **S** are the social times we have together.

Our team enjoy a potluck dinner occasionally and in the summer a BBQ out at The Barn, in Karapiro. There we see the CDs of photos we've taken at various places. And any other interesting matters.

During the months I need to send in a list of jobs and hours we've done to the MEIT office. I also send a short report of what we've been up to.

**There are key persons** we need to ask questions of from time to time – some of these folk are in this room today! Everyone is so willing to help and that's marvellous. You only need to ask and you have it.

Thankyou for giving me this opportunity to tell you about our team today and good luck with your projects. Are there any questions?

Pat Williams.  
29<sup>th</sup> June, 2007

As already explained, the work we have been doing on Maungatautari mountain will help preserve the Maungatautari Ecological District, which is our heritage and promotes our community identity. Restoring this forest with a healthy diversity of indigenous native plants will encourage growth of endangered species, both plants, birds, insects, frogs. and reptiles to enhance this Waikato icon and the whole surrounding area, forever.

Eventually corridors of native forest will also benefit the birdlife of the Waikato by linking other neighbouring forested areas in radiating out from the mountain. Then birdlife in home gardens and in local towns will increase far beyond what we – in our lifetime – have ever known.

Already Maungatautari is welcoming many visitors from all over New Zealand and overseas to see this wonderful spectacle of pristine native forest at it's best.

For the moment, it's our turn to work towards establishing a successful, sustainable enterprise that ensures the longevity of this project.

The Maungatautari Planting/Weeding Team are endeavouring to restore to the forest on Maungatautari mountain a healthy diversity of indigenous plants.

Today the Maungatautari Ecological District has less than 10% of the original indigenous vegetation remaining. The Waikato is one of the regions with the greatest indigenous diversity loss in New Zealand.

Maungatautari is large enough to be home for a wide diversity of self sustaining plant species. Endangered birds which include Kiwi, Takahe, Kaka and Kokako are slowly being re-introduced, with other species to follow.

We hope the dawn chorus will be reinstated, filling the forest to capacity with native birds and other wildlife to share with all New Zealanders.

Specific catagories our team is involved in are: -

- Sourcing of seedlings
- Seed Collection
- Potting up of seedlings
- Planting and Weeding

Over the years since the commencement of this massive project, our team have been amazed at the re-germination and growth of the forest on Maungatautari. It's wonderful to see the small seedlings now lining the fence and tracks, in particular inside the two enclosures on the North and South of the mountain.

In planting, we are particularly careful about the ecosourcing of the seedling species we use. In doing so, we help to preserve the Maungatautari Ecological District which is our natural heritage and promotes our community identity.

Our team meets weekly, usually for one or two mornings, somewhere on the mountain. We watch the TV weather forecast on the Sunday evening, then arrange the best days that week suitable for the work in hand.

The members are then contacted with the arrangements of where to meet, the time and what to take. Each member has likes and dislikes, availabilities and capabilities – all of which are understood.

Food and liquids are always taken in a backpack, in order to sustain our energies for the period of work. Each member takes their own garden tools for their use.

Now with much of the planting project completed on the maunga, we have begun encouraging local farmers to use our ecosourced seedlings, in order to plant up their riparian zones.

These radiating corridors of native trees leading from Maungatautari, will then encourage more birdlife into our Waikato Ecological District in the future.

We have been given the use of a barn at Karapiro. Our team have adapted it to our specific requirements. Some mornings of the week a group collect there and spend hours potting-on seedlings. They are then stored there under a watering system until they are transported away to the planting site.

This particular process is ongoing as we expect to be assisting many local farmers with plantings in the near future.

Weeding in and around the two enclosures on Maungatautari will also be ongoing, not to mention the 47 kilometres of fenceline around the whole mountain. We expect to be busy for a long time to come.

The Planting Team have also assisted other organizations in the Waikato. We are well aware that wetlands have a real need to be managed. Environment Waikato works very hard to control any swamp and bog in the area. Recently our team were asked to help plant up the wetlands at Opoutia, near Rangiriri.

We have also assisted them with local subdivisions when wetlands were to be drained for a housing development. Our team were able to rescue many wetland grasses and ferns, alongside digging machinery in action. Scary stuff! Many of these plants were placed on farms in the Maungakawa area.

Experts who we consult for any further ecological information are at Waikato University, Environment Waikato, Landcare Research and Department of Conservation.