



April 2020 Newsletter

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Secretary: Carol Andrews secretary@tawabush.org.nz

Monthly working bees: 2nd Sunday and 4th Tuesday (Please note that these are suspended for four weeks).

- **Coordinator Sunday:** Richard Herbert: herbert.r@xtra.co.nz
- **Coordinator Tuesday:** Andrew Liley: acfhliley@gmail.com

1. Annual General Meeting 11 March 2020

This was a very worthwhile evening with 45 people in attendance. After the business, **Danielle Shanahan**, Director, Centre for People and Nature at 'Zealandia' gave us an informative and illustrated presentation. *Wellington is bucking the trend*, said Danielle, and with supporting data, she showed us that the re-establishment of native bird species is significantly on the rise in our region. In appreciation of her presentation, Danielle was subsequently presented with a copy of the book, *Tawa the tree, the community and its reserves* written by Gil Roper in 2017.



and Denise Clements (WCC Ranger – Parks and Reserves).

Committee:

The following personnel were elected:

Gary Beecroft (President), John Burnet (Vice-President), Carol Andrews (Secretary), Chris Paice (Treasurer), Richard Herbert, Andrew Liley, Denis Rogerson and Gil. Roper.

Members of the extended committee who will attend meetings are: Wayne Pincott, Helen Roper



2. Thoughtful botanical sayings!

'Plant a tree for unborn eyes to see'

Reputed saying from Wilf Mexted

'The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now'.

Source unknown, but provided by Richard Herbert

3. Plant Propagation Units

Following the working bees to clear the site adjacent to the Tawa MZT building, the construction of two shade houses has commenced.

Netting has been placed on the northern-side fence to provide windbreak protection for the units. There is still further work to do on stabilising the shade houses, constructing and setting up benches within the units.



4. Karaka - friend or foe?



Karaka foliage and fruit.

Karaka (*Cornocarpus laevigatus*) is not an endemic tree to Wellington, but they are common in many of the Tawa reserves as fruit are easily dispersed and they grow quickly. The production of the ripe orange karaka fruit occurs in January to March. Under the orange skin is an edible pulp, but the kernel or stone contains the toxic alkaloid karakin.

Toxicity:

Although eaten by kererū, fruit can be poisonous to dogs and humans and the fruit from previous year's fruit can still be toxic.

Symptoms:

Clinical signs of eating kernels of karaka are neurological and include

weakness, vomiting, confusion, leg paralysis and convulsions. However, dried karaka fruit kernels were an important kai for Māori and over winter when carbohydrates were scarce. The fruit had to be carefully heated to ensure the toxicity was lost prior to eating.

Location:

Karaka seedlings are very easily sighted, with those pictured being near the Achilles Close entrance to Redwood Bush. These have grown following seed dispersal from an adult tree on a private property near the end of the cul de sac.

In some other reserves in the Wellington region, there has been an active move to remove karaka in light of their toxicity indicated above but also because of their non-endemic nature to the region..



Ripe karaka fruit.



Karaka tree seedlings.

5. Have you sighted these in Redwood Bush recently?



Kōhia fruit in leaf litter.

Currently scattered over the ground in the leaf litter in parts of Redwood Bush are the oval, orange fruit of the **NZ native passion vine, *Passiflora tetrandra* or kōhia.**

Plants form thick flexible stems that climb on trunks of canopy trees. The vines (lianes) ascend into the

canopy and produce 'passionfruit-like' flowers that develop into the fruit that fall to the ground, especially during January to March.

The fruit is dry and bitter and barely palatable to humans.

Māori pressed pulp from the cooked seeds to make oil for rubbing and adornment.

Kōhia are not to be confused with **supplejack (kareao), *Rhipogonum scandens* vines** which at maturity, tend to have thinner and jointed stems and together, appear as a tangled mass. Paired leaves are produced in branches in the canopy where vines are exposed to light, and the red oval fruit are present most of the year.



Tangled supplejack (kareao) vines.

Māori used the tough stems of kareao as battens to tie up thatched sides and roofs of whare, and for tying up fences and platforms. These were also used to make eel traps, while the new tender shoots of vines were palatable to eat.



Kōhia flowers.



Kōhia vines.



Foliage and fruit of supplejack.



'Jointed' vines of supplejack.

7. Germination of pigeonwood, (porokaiwhiri or *Hedycarya arborea*)

Recently, **Denis Rogerson, John Burnet and Richard Herbert** sighted a huge pile of pigeonwood seed in Woodburn Reserve that had passed through the gut of the kererū. This seed was collected, and **Helen Roper** sowed it alongside other seed that had just dropped to the ground.

By March 2020, the percentage of seed germination was significantly different.



Sown 19 December 2019.
Minimal germination.

Sown 20 January 2020.
Abundant germination.

As seedlings get bigger, they will be pricked out, grown on and be eventually planted out in the Tawa Reserves.



Pigeonwood fruit.



Explanation

During ingestion and digestion by kererū, the exterior flesh of the orange fruit is removed. The hard seed coat is softened to allow moisture and air to be accessed by the growing embryo in the seed. A portion of nature's fertiliser is also added!



Seedlings germinated after seed had passed through the gut of the kererū.

6. TC Community Education Course 'Tawa and its reserves'

This recent six-week course was attended by 10 people – all non-members of FOTBR. The course covered the history of Tawa and its reserves, identification of native trees, surveys done on lizards and birds, as well as pest control in the reserves. The course included three guided walks: Redwood Bush, Larsen Crescent Reserve and Wilf Mexted Reserve. For your information, the link to the course is: <https://www.tawacommed.co.nz/Course,History-botany-ornithology-and-pest-control-in-Tawa-bush-reserves,4098> It is planned to repeat the course in Term 1, 2021.

Gil Roper
FOTBR Committee