

# Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust

News and Views

September 2024



*Photo: Lucy Broad*

## **Nau mai haere mai, welcome to our newsletter**

It's spring and Ōtari is a busy place: flowers flowering, birds feeding, courting, nesting, and for us humans it's time to enjoy the Rā Tūwhera ki Ōtari Open Day. Co-hosted by Wellington Gardens and the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust - there will be much of interest for everyone.

You'll find more about Open Day, plus Ōtari news, Trust updates, stories of fungi and weaving and conservation science, and profiles of the people who help to make Ōtari so special, all here in our September newsletter. Fix yourself a cuppa and enjoy your read.

**Website:** [www.owbt.nz](http://www.owbt.nz)

# Message from the Chair

I'm delighted to report that the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust is going well, thanks to the great support and work of our members and volunteers.

We're looking forward to mingling with you at the Ōtari Open Day. There'll be games, behind the scenes tours, plants sales, opportunity to meet people involved in all nature of local environmental protection, and of course our popular Trust cakes and preserves stall.

Huge thanks to our forest weeders who celebrated their first anniversary in August! This group meets every 1st and 3rd Thursday morning of the month and are making a significant impact on invasive weeds encroaching into Ōtari.

Our Trust community is growing, we're thrilled to have now surpassed 400 members! This interest in and support for protecting Ōtari-Wilton's Bush is indeed inspiring.



And we are looking to secure the future, with our Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Fund now exceeding \$110,000. We thank our Treasurer, Tim Mason, for his leadership in establishing this fund with the Nikau Foundation. It's aimed to help with the conservation, education and research of native plants and you are welcome to contribute, just visit [www.nikaufoundation.nz/stories-giving-library/a-fund-for-the-future-of-native-plant-conservation-at-tari-wiltons-bush](http://www.nikaufoundation.nz/stories-giving-library/a-fund-for-the-future-of-native-plant-conservation-at-tari-wiltons-bush).

We hope you are keeping up with Ōtari's news through our social media, posted by Trustee Kathy Ombler. You can find these on our website: [www.owbt.nz](http://www.owbt.nz). Just click on the Instagram or Facebook icon at the top. We now have 768 Instagram and 1450 Facebook followers from around the country – in fact the world.

A heartfelt thank you to all our tireless volunteers: our hosts who greet visitors every weekend, our garden maintenance team, our forest weeders, Kaiwharawhara restoration group, nursery propagation team and our many tour guides. Our guided walks and tours have recently attracted garden clubs, tramping groups, schools, scouts and girl guides, plus all the night owls who joined our winter glowworm adventures. We're also grateful for the tireless trapping efforts of RAMBO (Rats and Mustelids Blitzing Otari).

Special mention must go to Vera and David Burton. After perhaps 20 years of editing our newsletter, Vera is taking a well-deserved break. Similarly, David has 'retired' himself from guiding evening glowworm tours, which he says he began in the 1980s! What an incredible record. Huge kudos and thanks to you both.

Looking ahead now - the Trustees, in collaboration with Ōtari staff, have begun planning for the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Centenary, in 2026. This milestone will celebrate the vision of Leonard Cockayne, and others, which led to our 'open-air native plant museum' and protected native forest. One hundred years on, Ōtari is a six-star garden of international importance and the only botanic garden in Aotearoa/New Zealand solely dedicated to native plants. We welcome your thoughts and ideas for this momentous occasion.

Finally, a big thank you to everyone for your unwavering support and enthusiasm. Together, we are making a difference for Ōtari-Wilton's Bush.

Ngā mihi nui,

Kevin O'Connor

# Ōtari Update



Spring is in the air and the kōwhai are putting on a good show throughout the gardens. It's great to see the sun more as well having our ngutukākā, toropapa and *Clematis paniculata* coming into flower too. The kākā, tūi and kererū are all vying for the nectar in the fresh blossoms as each tree comes into bloom. Local photographers seem like a constant presence here, and they have captured some amazing images lately, including a kōtare catching skinks while being harassed by tūi, and kākā giving each other flowers as a part of pair bonding! Recently a pīwaiwaka was found in our parapara too.

My team has been working hard to finish the winter plantings, including a day spent on the slip below Wilton Park. We also put in a few dozen plants in a grassy area just along from the entrance on Wilton Road near the Surrey Street bus turn around. In this area we have been controlling weeds such as gorse, broom, blackberry and *Tradescantia* with a view to completely planting the area up next winter. With the support of Nate from Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara Sanctuary to Sea and volunteers from CentrePort, we removed 1.5 tonnes of rubbish and weeds from the forest in this area in a day, including a shoe with huruhuruwhena (shining spleenwort) growing out of it.

We recently have got a permit approved to collect plants from Mt Ruapehu, and are planning some trips in the coming months to expand our small collection that is currently mulched with red scoria under the big ngaio at the end of the Cockayne Lawn. We are looking forward to connecting with Ngāti Rangi while we are up there, who are also keen on getting some plants from the sub-alpine and alpine areas when we are there.

I am pleased to report that almost all people walking their dogs at Ōtari are obeying the rules and have their dogs on leads now. This is a result of the greater awareness of locals and dog owners about the presence of kiwi in the area, so thank you everyone who has had a polite conversation about this.

We are all looking forward to Open Day this year. Jane, Lynley and other volunteers have been working diligently to propagate many plants in the volunteer nursery to have up for sale, which are looking great. We are stoked to have many of our close partners coming along who all work hard to connect people to plants and restore and protect nature across the city. There are some behind-the-scenes tours as well as some great workshops happening, in addition to some live music and traditional Māori games. Have a look online and in this newsletter to see all the activities planned and book into a tour or workshop to avoid disappointment on the day.

See you at Open Day!

Tim Park

Kaiwhakahaere Ōtari Manager Ōtari Native Botanic Garden  
and Wilton's Bush Reserve



Tom (Ōtari), Nate (Sanctuary2Sea)  
and the lost shoe with the  
sprouting spleenwort!



## *In association with the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust*

The Trust will as usual be helping to host this annual celebration of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush, and the many groups and individuals who work to protect and enhance the natural world around Wellington.

Rā Tūwhera ki Ōtari | Ōtari Open Day 2024 will feature the usual highlights (such as the Behind the Scenes Tours of the Ōtari Nursery and Lions Ōtari Conservation Lab, guided by Ōtari gardeners and conservation scientists) and guests (RAMBO, Capital Kiwi, Conservation Volunteers, our neighbours Trelissick Park Group, entomologists - and many more).

You won't want to miss Tū Mātau Ora (traditional Māori activities on the lawn), the live music, or the workshops (rongoā traditional Māori health, raranga weaving, and terrarium demonstrations, plus Taonga Takāro - Open Lab).

The Trust will of course be present, promoting all the things we do to support Ōtari-Wilton's Bush and letting potential new members and volunteers know how they can become involved, and why. We'll be running a couple of short guided tours, selling a few plants from the Trust's own nursery, and up for grabs will be amazing home baking and preserves made in the kitchens of our own Trust members and supporters.

**NOTE TO BAKERS AND PRESERVERS: we welcome your contributions. Please deliver your wares to Tāne Whakapiripiri, the Visitor Centre, on the day, from 9.30am.**

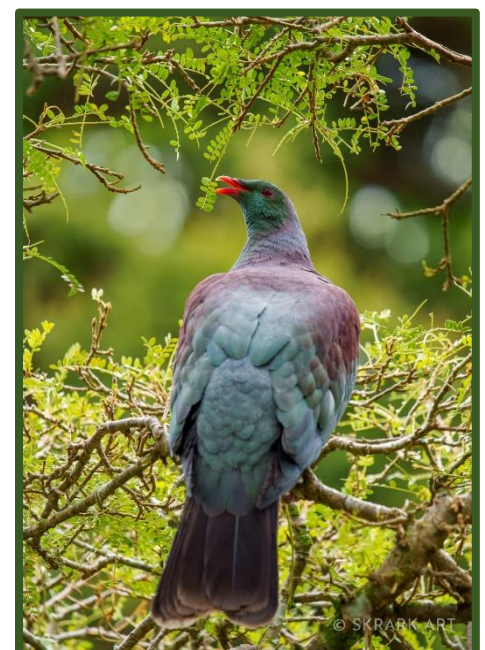
### *This could be yours*



Thanks to the talent and generosity of Wellington specialist bird artist, Judi Lapsley Miller, we are thrilled to be offering this very special work: *Kererū eating kōwhai leaves* for our feature Open Day raffle.

Tickets will be available at the Trust table.

You can see more of Judi's work on Art by Judi Lapsley Miller at [www.artbyjilm.com](http://www.artbyjilm.com). Or visit 'Our Feathered Friends', an exhibition by Judi and fellow artist Carol Theologo currently showing at Zealandia.



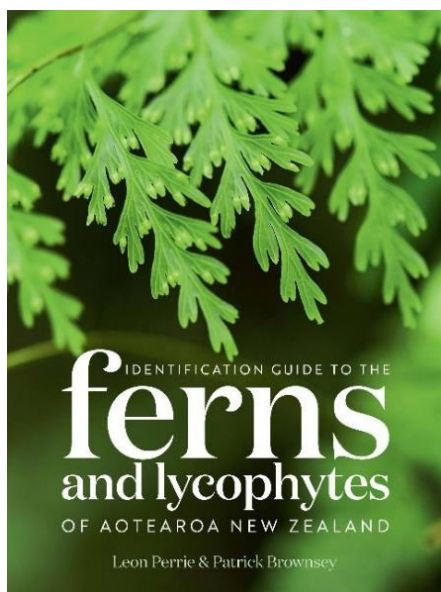
# Ōtari Open Day

14 Sept 2024



**Open Day Location Map: here is where you'll find everything and everyone – and when. Register for tours and workshops (all free) on [Eventfinda.co.nz](https://www.eventfinda.co.nz). The Garden Tours will be hosted by Trust guides.**

## What's that fern?



Good news for fans of native ferns (and who isn't?). The definitive, visual guide book to New Zealand ferns was launched in August.

It's co-authored by Leon Perrie, a good friend of Ōtari known for the wonderful tours he leads introducing people to native plants, and the late Patrick Brownsey, who made a huge contribution to New Zealand botany and natural history. The book is clearly set out, introducing a guide to genera, then to individual species. There are heaps of images, and not too many words.

'It's the kind of book I would have loved when I was learning about plants,' said Perrie, Curator of Botany at Te Papa, at the launch of this beautiful tome.



*At the launch: Leon Perrie with Ōtari stalwart, Mick Parsons*

Using the book is easy, confirmed recent Trust chair and eminent botanist, Dr Carol West, who launched the book. 'I'd defy anyone who knows nothing about ferns to not be able to find the fern they're looking for in this book.'

Published by Te Papa Press, the book will be available for purchase (\$50) on Open Day, and every weekend from our hosts at Tāne Whakapiripiri, the Ōtari Visitor Centre.

## News from our volunteer groups

### From the Trust Nursery

Our monthly plant sales are continuing to be well attended, says co-ordinator Jane Humble. 'They are quite social and a lot of fun as our loyal customers turn out early on the second Saturday of each month. As a test for our customers, we have not had any social media promotion of sales in July or August. One loyal chap says that's OK, he has marked each second Saturday for the entire year! Who would have thought?



Jane Humble

'Since the beginning of the year the nursery volunteers have been very busy preparing stock for our Ōtari Open Day. We are very proud of the collection we have ready for sale on the day. On the whole these plants are suitable for Wellington home gardens rather than large revegetation projects. Some of these species are seldom found on sale.

'We are also very grateful for the wonderful support we have received from Tom Belworthy and the Ōtari staff.'

### Gardens collections weeding and maintenance team



Gardener, Joel Clement (Clem) works with perennial volunteer, Lynley Trower

Jane Humble reports that the current team of Thursday morning Weeding Volunteers has been working hard in what has been an exceptionally good season for weeds. 'They are such a dedicated team that there has not been a single Thursday morning actually cancelled because of bad weather, someone has always turned up though we do stress that it is voluntary!

'We are getting to know each other and everyone's specialities. The Otari staff is very good to us too and we appreciate that they do choose the most sheltered gardens depending on the day. '

### Forest weeders

Time flies! This dedicated group of weeders recently celebrated their first anniversary, quietly working away on nasty weeds trying to infiltrate Ōtari's native forest. There is so much to do, Ōtari garden staff are simply unable to do everything so this group makes a big difference. Many hands make light (and collegial) work and it's always a delight to see large patches of unwanted plants like *Tradescantia*, *Montbretia* and *Selaginella* disappear - as does the morning tea! This work is also of significant help for the regeneration of native species.

We have room for more volunteers, so if you have some time on the first or third Thursday morning of the month, and want to join this happy, hard-working bunch please contact Maggie at bayfield@xtra.co.nz.



Carol, Linda, Rick, and Maggie with Ōtari staff Jaiden and Travis

## RAMBO (Rats and Mustelids Blitzing Ōtari)



Trap 'mechanic' Robert Thomson

With nesting season approaching, and kiwi moving into Ōtari environs, RAMBO trappers have good reason to continue their vigilance, reports Jim Tait. 'We were delighted to recently receive new boxes and BT200 traps (similar to the DOC200), from Wellington City Council. These will replace some of the old boxes that have been in the bush for 17 years. We are also grateful to Robert Thomson for calibrating and adapting these traps for us. Robert has been our volunteer 'trap mechanic' for many years, he's been able to bring back into operational use almost half of the older traps brought in for repair.'



Flipping Timmy, safe from kiwi

RAMBO members have also been involved in 'kiwi-proofing' the Skyline possum trapline, taking out ground-based Timms traps and replacing them with 'Flipping Timmys'. These are placed on trees and fence posts out of reach of foraging kiwi.

## Kaiwharawhara Revegetation Group



Wilbur Dovey

More than 20 years on and they just don't stop: coordinator Wilbur Dovey says over the past three months this group has planted around 140 trees in various areas on Ōtari's southern slopes. Even better, he says that the core Ōtari group now has several new volunteers who have joined up through various sources. 'Volunteer numbers for these winter plantings varied from between six and a very welcome ten.'

The group has also combined with Kia Mouriora Sanctuary to Sea volunteers, removing *Tradescantia* from Ōtari in support of Sanctuary to Sea's collaborative, whole of catchment restoration initiative.

## Guided Tours

Winter is generally quiet for our volunteer guides but not this year, report tour managers, Susan Timmins and Annie Yeates. The word certainly got out about the glowworm tours, which were deliberately timed for early or late moon cycles, when the sky is darker and the glowworms brighter!

'Across winter we guided 258 people in 13 tours. Additional tours were booked by sea scouts, guides and schools. More wanted to come but there was no room at the inn,' says Susan. Looking ahead, a few bespoke garden and tramping club tours are coming up, plus a bevy of 90 children from St Benedict's School. Guide training is ongoing, with a workshop session planned later this month. Meanwhile Susan and Annie are working with Ōtari's Tim Park and Tom Belworthy to keep up to date with what's in the gardens.



Paparangi Girl Guides spotted bag moths, stick insects, eels, many spiders and of course gorgeous glowworms on their night tour

## Weekend Hosts



Zyla Sharma (left) and Tessa Park, hosting towards their Duke of Edinburgh Awards

Some new, some young (including those volunteering as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award), and a whole bevy of dedicated, long-term hosts continue the tradition of greeting and advising visitors to Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. Every weekend they're there at Tāne Whakapiripiri, the visitor centre. They'll chat about walks and trails, tell you what's flowering, and which birds are active (in case you haven't noticed). They also have a great collection of cards and books for sale, including our own, *Ōtari – Two hundred years of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush*, and Leon Perrie's new guide to New Zealand ferns. Being a host is a great way of engaging with people and learning more about Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. If you're interested in joining the team, get in touch with our host coordinator, Justin Nacey [justinnacey@gmail.com](mailto:justinnacey@gmail.com).

## Weaving their way into the future – good news from Ōtari Raranga Weavers

Ōtari Raranga are going from strength to strength, and kaiako/producer Linda Lee is delighted to have received support to set up a Raranga Tuakana Series. This will support advanced learning for kairaranga (weavers) who have demonstrated dedication to tikanga, preservation/care of plants, skill development, and have attended Ōtari Raranga workshops for one to three years. Currently there are around 10-20 first time tauira (students) attending weekend workshops at Ōtari, around a third of these are visiting Ōtari for the first time.



Raranga kaiako, Linda Lee, helps tauira Jade Jones

Meanwhile, the more competent weavers are working on larger, more technical projects, with some also taking up kaiāwhina (support) roles during class as it's not easy for Linda and fellow raranga rangatira, Frank Topia, to give adequate attention to the needs of all tauira.

"We are excited and appreciative that Wellington Community Trust has provided funding for us to run a Raranga Tuakana Series, to awahi (support) our tuakana and kaiāwhina," says Linda.

"Our aim is to provide our kairaranga with the skills and confidence to lead our classes and ensure the long-term sustainability of the Ōtari Raranga programme, alongside sharing knowledge with their whānau, hapū, iwi and wider communities. 'With the support of WCC, Tim Park and the Ōtari team, and Urban Street Brokerage, the programme will include making contact with park rangers from around the motu so that we can access other traditional weaving fibres, such as kiekie, toī and pīngao, that grow abundantly in specific regions. 'By including these into our weaving, supplementing the wonderful resource we already have in Ōtari's Pa Harakeke, we can enable our kairaranga to better express their own kaupapa and whakapapa through this journey.'

Ōtari Raranga Weavers will be running a one-hour wananga/workshop on Open Day (11am). Book your place on [Eventfinda.co.nz](https://www.eventfinda.co.nz). For more information about weaving, visit [Ōtari Raranga](https://www.otari.co.nz).



Putiputi (harakeke flowers) created by mum Kylie and daughter Ruby Penny



## Acknowledging Dave and Vera Burton

A feature of all the volunteer work undertaken for the Trust is just how many years so many volunteers give, like Dave and Vera Burton.

Dave can't even remember when he started guiding glowworm tours – he thinks it was in the 1980s! And Vera says she's been doing the Trust's quarterly newsletter for 17 years, or maybe that's 20. Vera has decided to take a well-earned rest from the newsletter, and Dave has similarly 'retired' himself from leading the glowworm tours – but happily he's continuing to share his knowledge, and special guiding qualities for day time tours.



*Vera and Dave*

He does still recall his very first glowworm tour, not just because there were 54 people in the party! 'It was raining buckets, but everyone still wanted to go. The compensation was that the glowworms were outstanding. As we walked back down the valley, the glow worms on the far bank of the stream were reflected in the water, and it looked like a curtain of liquid fire. I've never seen them as spectacular since.' On his early tours, Dave says he just concentrated on the glowworms, but that soon changed. 'After a lifetime of teaching biology, you collect a lot of stories, and when I started to include some of those stories the tours really took off. I've often said that the biological history of New Zealand is written large in the plants if you know where to look, and so the tours became far more than just looking at glowworms. I'm certainly still continuing as a daytime guide. I've been teaching biology for 60 years, and I'll only stop when I have to!

Vera's association with Ōtari has also been a long one. She recalls that when she was coordinator of adult classes at Onslow College, John Dawson took night classes on native plants, and these included visits to Ōtari. Meanwhile she has been reflecting about the changes in newsletter production since she began.

'In the "old days" when it was printed and mailed there was much more crafting in the formatting. You could only fit a certain number of pages in an envelope, so fitting everything in was important. Pictures could be large which was just as well as they weren't electronic!



*Happily, Dave will continue guiding day time tours*

'Then the first emails were quite restricted by the size of the total file, so photos had to be electronically downsized. With digital you can be quite lazy,' she adds. 'The size of the total file hardly matters so you can have as many pages as you like! Go for it!'

One thing that hasn't changed, she adds, is the value, beauty, and serenity of Otari-Wilton's Bush.

A huge thanks for all your work, Dave and Vera, from all of our members.

## Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust - Current Trustees:

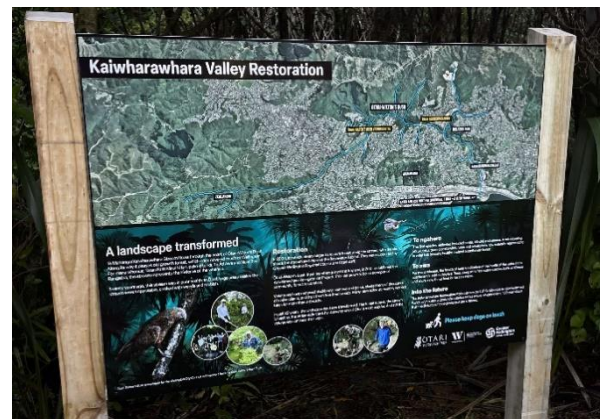
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*The Trustees welcome comments and questions from members on any matters relating to Ōtari-Wilton's Bush or the Trust. For Newsletter queries or contributions contact Trustee Kathy Ombler.*

## New Signs in the Valley

For three reasons: to celebrate more than two decades of outstanding achievement by the Kaiwharawhara restoration team, acknowledge the new, whole of catchment collaboration, and not least to update a former, outdated sign on the small clearing by the big slip, new signs have been erected in the Kaiwharawhara valley.

Telling the story of the valley's restoration, they were produced and funded by the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust, with significant help from Wellington City Council along with a contribution from Greater Wellington Regional Council (who first initiated the restoration work). The sign's stunning design and bird photography was the creation of photographer and designer Tony Stoddard. (Tony can often be seen in Ōtari, camera in hand, searching for feathered subjects to snap. You can see his wonderful results on <https://wildbirds.nz/>)



If you haven't already, check out the new signs. One has replaced the old one is on the small clearing, the other on the lawn by Ōtari's southern car park.

## The Mulch Pile

We often get asked about the mulch pile, in Ōtari's northern car park. Here's the low down. Local arborists know they can deposit their chipped material at the car park. This saves them the time and cost involved in dumping it at the tip. The mulch resource is primarily for use by staff in Ōtari's gardens – five hectares of internationally significant native botanic garden can certainly use a lot of mulch! Even so, sometimes there is a surplus, this is when the local community can take some for personal use or for community projects. The simple rule is, when the rope is across the mulch pile, it's closed to the public because Ōtari needs it. When there is a surplus and the rope is down, you are welcome to gather up a bag or so. Please be considerate and respect closures. And take modest amounts so there is some for everyone. Do not bring your trailer or you will be turned away! If you have an arborist working at your place check if they know that they can drop the chippings at the mulch pile. Spread the word to your friends, and happy gardening.

## News from the Lions Ōtari Plant Conservation Lab

**From Karin van der Walt, Conservation and Science Advisor**

Our conservation and science work continues. Recent highlights have included a visit to a local population of ghost orchids (*Corybas cryptanthus*). This tiny, fascinating spider orchid is mycoheterotrophic, which means it has a life-long dependency on fungal partners. Unlike most other orchids, it never produces any green bits and thus lacks the ability to photosynthesize.



*Spot the tiny flower!*

With part of a grant received from the Australian Orchid Foundation, we will be investigating ways to grow the ghost orchid by identifying the fungal partners it requires, not only for seed germination, but also to support it throughout its life cycle.

Other highlights in the lab include the permanent appointment of Jennifer Alderton-Moss (up till now Jen has been part time) and we welcome Sarah Goldberg as a master's student and casual research technician. Sarah is doing much needed research into the seed physiology of some of our podocarp species - see her story below.



*Jen (left) and Karin searching for the tiny ghost orchid, *Corybas cryptanthus*. Photo Carlos Lechnebach*

## From Sarah Goldberg, Master of Science Student and casual research technician

I've been fascinated by trees and their seeds since childhood. Growing up in Wisconsin, the maple trees surrounding our family home dispersed seeds like tiny helicopters falling from the sky. They covered the grass where we played and when I peeled back the seed coat to see inside, I thought it was a miracle that such small seeds could grow into large and magnificent trees.



*Sarah Goldberg*

After years working in an office, I decided to get outdoors and support reforestation. My interest in direct seeding developed while working on the Stockton coal mine rehabilitation project, near Westport. One of the areas requiring revegetation was not safely accessible for nursery stock planting, which led us to explore drone seeding. While planning the operation, I had a lot of questions about the seeds: How do we know they're viable? What's the best way to store them after collection to maintain viability? What are their germination requirements? My questions highlighted knowledge gaps around the seed physiology of native species; knowledge that is fundamental for effective restoration.

Podocarpaceae species, like kahikatea, tōtara, rimu, mataī and miro, were originally common canopy trees throughout Aotearoa. Reestablishing these trees, where seed sources are scarce or absent, mostly depends on manual planting of nursery stock or direct seeding. Knowing the seed biology of these target species could increase successful reintroduction. The objectives of my research are to assess the viability of fresh seed, establish short-term seed storage behaviours, and determine germination requirements to inform restoration of select podocarp trees.

To achieve this, fresh mature seeds from miro, mataī, kahikatea, and tōtara were collected this autumn from around Wellington and Upper Hutt. Baseline viability, moisture content, and germination tests were established and four short-term seed storage conditions have been tested. Seed viability using tetrazolium stain and germination potential are being assessed at 3-month intervals for one year. This method may also determine if cold/moist stratification enhances germination.

Research on miro, which is known to take 2 to 7 years to germinate, is focused on determining dormancy type and investigating strategies to alleviate seed dormancy. Lab experiments are being carried out at Ōtari and a direct seeding trial has been established at Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne Ecosanctuary. Results from this research will be openly shared to assist both nursery propagation and direct seeding operations.



A miro seed in its seed coat (cracked open)

I'm incredibly grateful to my supervisors, Danielle Shanahan and Karin van der Walt, for believing in me and supporting this research. It's an honor to be discovering the secrets of the seeds and a gift to share these practical learnings with others.

***Sarah is a working on a Master of Science by thesis in Ecology & Biodiversity through the School of Biological Sciences at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University in Wellington.***

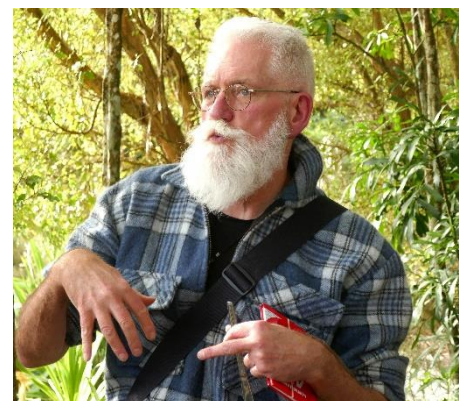
## In search of fungi in Ōtari

Thanks to Trustee and fungi guru, Geoff Ridley, for this special insight

I've been observing fungi at Ōtari for around 18 years and for the last six or so years, along with other enthusiasts, have been adding my observations to iNaturalist. Last year I decided to start visiting Ōtari more regularly and wander the tracks more systematically than I had done in the past, with the aim of producing a checklist of the larger fungi of Ōtari.

Unlike plants, which are there all the time, most fungi are ephemeral, that is as decomposers they colonise and rot their substrate and when its used up, they die. The process of using their substrate might take years, as in the case of a fallen tree, or days for that dog poo on the side of the track. To make it even more difficult for the observer, the fungus grows inside the substrate so we can't generally see it until it fruits, forming a fruit-body, such as a mushroom. The production of fruit-bodies is driven not only by the amount of nutrients in the substrate being decomposed, but also by climatic factors such as rainfall, humidity, temperature and, for Ōtari, how windy it's been. And finally, fruit-bodies only last about a week so you must be there at the right time to see them.

Over the last few months, I have been wandering Ōtari's tracks about once a week, making my observations and recording them at iNaturalist. To see these, as well as all the other enthusiasts' fungi observations, go to *Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Fungi* at <https://inaturalist.nz/projects/otari-wilton-s-bush-fungi>. At the time of writing (August 25, 2024), there had been 1,666 observations made. Note that these also include lichens, with 258 species recognised.



Check these three examples of species added to the Ōtari list this year:



*Cuphophyllus austropratensis*  
Found in leaf litter near Moko



*Phaeocollybia* sp.  
Probably a new, undescribed species,  
found in tawa leaf litter less than 10m  
from the Visitor Centre



*Gloiocephala xanthocephala*  
Tiny mushroom fruiting on a puka  
leaf, also found less than 10m  
from the Visitor Centre

## Ōtari people

### Meet Tom Belworthy, gardener and acting Team Leader

I used to love gardening with my late grandad at Pleasant Point, jumping in his little old trusty Skoda and helping out (if you could call it that). I have always been interested in the outdoors, plants and animals. I spent my childhood in Aro Valley and my first memory of Ōtari was coming as a kid on school trips, probably running all over the rockery. How times change.

Before gardening I had various jobs; labouring, demolition, and hospitality, and I worked for children's charity Barnados for six months. In 2014, I started my three-year apprenticeship with WCC, completing my Level 4 Advanced Amenity Horticulture Certificate through Primary ITO while working across council gardens and nurseries. After that I worked in the WCC Horticulture team. Then, in 2021, I really scored: getting a job at Ōtari. I'm now acting Team Leader while Megan Ireland is away for about a year.



I really enjoy working with all the people involved in Ōtari, spending time with the volunteers, people who care about similar things to me and I'm fortunate to be in a team of good-hearted people. I like the work variation we get at Ōtari. Growing our own plants means that we get to assist with the full cycle of a plant's life, from germinating seed or cuttings, to growing the plant on then planting it or giving it to someone to put it back where it belongs. I also care very much for the ngahere and feel lucky that we get to spend time in the taonga that exists here.

My biggest challenge is juggling all the different tasks we want to achieve. We are a small team with a (mighty) volunteer army. But managing all of the bush, Te Papa collections, our nursery, and a 6 star botanic garden of international significance can be tricky. On top of that, we contribute to conservation work where we can around the country. We could not do all this ourselves and I cherish the support we receive from all who help us, especially our volunteers.

One of my favourite parts of the week is Thursday morning, when our regular garden volunteers come in. We always have fun while getting through the work we would not otherwise manage without them. Rain, shine, or cyclone they come. Some days when it's particularly stormy my team will ask, 'do you think any vols will come today?' and I can always answer, 'Yeah I'm sure at least Jane and Lynley will be here.' The volunteers are essential to us and we appreciate them greatly, not just for the work they help us with but also for being good people.



Outside work I enjoy exercise and play lots of sports, mainly a lot of rugby, for the Wellington Axemen and Wellington Centurions teams. I also play football and basketball, and run and tramp in my spare time, and I like being around my family and friends.

*We asked Tom for a funny story:* Not too long ago we heard a loud boom while working in the collections. A gunshot! We were sure of it. Some of the public also heard it. We ushered everyone away from danger as my brain raced to the conclusion, live shooter in the bush! The police came in pronto, and didn't find anything. Later in the day we collected up our tools were embarrassed to find our wheelbarrow tyre had exploded. The source of our live shooter's "gunshot" sound!

***Myoporum laetum*, ngaio**



***Drawing by Eleanor Burton***

This is a spreading tree found throughout the North and South Islands, also on the Three Kings Islands, and the Chatham Islands where it is probably naturalised. It is mostly found in coastal and lowland forest, though can be found further inland in Hawke's Bay, Wairarapa, and Rangataiki. It is very similar in appearance to the invasive Australian species, *Myoporum insularis*, but can be distinguished by its more obvious oil glands in the leaves and its often blackish leaf buds. Fruit are poisonous but loved by kererū. At Ōtari ngaio can be seen in the Grass and Sedge collection next to the Lookout.

# Membership Application/Donation Form

We welcome new members. Invite your friends to join us.

[Note there is also a membership form on our website: owbt.nz. This can be completed electronically or downloaded, printed and sent by post or email.]



Supporting Ōtari Native Botanic Garden and Wilton's Bush Reserve

## MEMBERSHIP / DONATION FORM

### YOUR DETAILS

NAMES/S:

ADDRESS:

PHONE:

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BILLING NAME AND ADDRESS:  
(If different from above)

NEW MEMBER OR RENEWAL (Please circle)

INDIVIDUAL \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

DOUBLE/FAMILY \$30 \_\_\_\_\_

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### DONATION

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I would like a receipt for my donation: Yes / No

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For online payment please pay to account 030518 0205713 000 (include your name and write MEMBERSHIP and/or DONATION in the fields).

Post to 150 Wilton Rd, Wilton, Wellington 6012.

For other payment options please contact [treasurer@owbt.nz](mailto:treasurer@owbt.nz).

COMMENTS: