
Chris Coad

The Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust was established in 2001 to support the council in its management of Ōtari.

"We provide huge assistance with our bevy of volunteers who help with the inevitable shortfall of labour," says Trust chair and noted botanist Dr Carol West.


Dr Carol West

"Trust volunteers have dedicated thousands of hours to forest restoration, weeding, replanting, garden maintenance, nursery propagation, predator control, guiding, and weekend hosting.

"Another key aim of the Trust is to promote awareness. We do this through hosting, guided walks, seminars, social media, and our book *Ōtari: Two hundred years of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush*. The underpinning purpose of these activities is to educate people on the importance of our unique native flora."

Advocacy is also a Trust focus. This year, it has been lobbying to keep a much-needed landscape redevelopment of the nursery and laboratory space in the city council's long-term plan.

"I am very proud of what the Trust has achieved in 20 years," says Carol. "Looking ahead, we are now poised to contribute even more significantly to native plant conservation, with the recent establishment of the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Fund." The Fund was launched in partnership with the Nikau Foundation in February.

In all, a huge sense of community and care exists around Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. This was epitomised at the opening of Pā Harakeke, when staff, trustees, volunteers, locals, and weavers all came together, sang tautoko waiata, and helped with the first hauhake harvest. Some then joined a raranga weaving workshop in the Leonard Cockayne Centre, the former curator's house, that looks over the plant collections, past the grave of Leonard Cockayne, to the forest beyond.

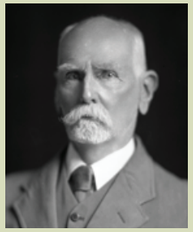
Entwining people, plants, culture, history, and conservation, it was Ōtari-Wilton's Bush encapsulated.


Volunteer gardeners. Kathy Ombler

LEONARD COCKAYNE (1855–1934) VISIONARY BOTANIST

Cockayne is regarded as one of the country's most influential scientists and prolific observers of New Zealand plants and vegetation.

For more than 30 years, he conducted botanical surveys throughout New Zealand, including the sub-Antarctic and Chatham Islands. His work was influential in the formation of Arthur's Pass National Park and kauri protection in Waipoua Forest.



He was passionate about plant ecology, and many of his published works remain the standard accounts of New Zealand vegetation.

He was, said Kew Gardens director Sir Arthur Hill, "an ecologist waiting for the term to be adopted by botanists". With Hill and other colleagues, he scoured the country, from mountains to offshore islands, collecting plants for observation and research at his beloved Ōtari.

It was indeed good fortune for Wellington that Cockayne settled there and realised his dream of creating a "museum" of native species. Cockayne and his wife Maude now rest in peace in Ōtari, their grave marked by a massive memorial stone overlooking the gardens and forest.

SIX STANDOUTS

MOKO, RIMU, *DACRYDIUM CUPRESSINUM*

Wellingtonians love to visit Moko, Ōtari's 800-year-old rimu, deemed so special it was bestowed a name by mana whenua. Like all the old-growth trees in Ōtari, Moko plays a vital role in the forest ecosystem, hosting epiphytes, including northern rātā and the rare kōhurangi Kirk's daisy, locally extinct in Wellington until its recent return to Ōtari

Moko. Carol West

NGUTU KĀKĀ, KĀKĀBEAK, *CLIANTHUS MAXIMUS*

It's hard to miss the flashy red ngutu kākā in Ōtari in spring. Kākābeak cultivars are readily available from garden centres, but only a handful of plants remain in the wild. Ōtari's ngutu kākā now come from Tairāwhiti, gifted by Graeme Atkins of Ngāti Porou, as the seedlings were destined to be grazed to death by deer and goats in the wild.

Ngutu kākā. Andy McArthur

MANAWATĀWHI KAIKŌMAKO, *PENNANTIA BAYLISIANA*

The unique flora of Manawatāwhi Three Kings Islands evolved in semi-tropical isolation, but goats, released in 1899 to provide food for castaways, decimated the vegetation. In 1945, a visiting botanist found just one manawatāwhi kaikōmako, growing on a cliff where the goats couldn't reach. It was described then as the world's rarest tree. The botanist retrieved cuttings, and one came to Ōtari, where the tree now flourishes. More of the species have subsequently been planted at Ōtari.

Manawatāwhi kaikōmako. Kathy Ombler

RĀTĀ MOEHAU, BARTLETT'S RĀTĀ, *METROSIDEROS BARTLETTII*

This white-flowering tree rātā was known to northern iwi Ngāti Kuri but only "discovered" by botanist John Bartlett in 1975. Just 13 plants remain in the wild, near Spirits Bay. Two established rātā moehau trees grow in Ōtari, and the new "rātā shrine" structure hosts a young rātā moehau in the Epiphyte Garden. Ōtari staff are working to support Ngāti Kuri kaitiaki by cross-pollinating flowering cuttings taken from the few remaining plants in the wild to help the species recover.

Bartlett's rātā, rātā moehau. Carlos Lehnebach

KŌHURANGI, KIRK'S DAISY, *BRACHYGLOTTIS KIRKII VAR. KIRKII*

Usually an epiphyte but also grows as a small shrub, this threatened white daisy is highly palatable to introduced mammals and was extinct in Wellington city. Plants collected from Wellington regional parks now flourish as both epiphytes on Moko and other old trees and as a shrub in the garden collections.

Kirk's daisy. Kathy Ombler

NORTHERN RĀTĀ, *METROSIDEROS ROBUSTA*

Wellington's northern rātā forests were cleared for farming, felled for building, and subsequently ravaged by possums. But, thanks to Job Wilton's protection and later intensive possum control, the city's only old-growth northern rātā forest survives in Ōtari. Some may be more than 1000 years old, and the tallest are more than 30m high.

Northern rātā. Kathy Ombler