



# Pukeiti NEWSLETTER

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.

*Rhododendrons in a Rainforest*

[www.pukeiti.org.nz](http://www.pukeiti.org.nz)

## Epiphytes at Pukeiti



*Metrosideros fulgens* a woody climber in flower now at Pukeiti.

The forest at Pukeiti covers 350 hectares. It was heavily logged in the late 1800s and early 1900s but in the last 70 years the restoration of the site has been actively encouraged. Hundreds of rimu have been planted and many can be seen along the roadside. Notwithstanding, the forest, botanically a conifer-broadleaf one has many characteristics of a tropical rainforest. While not as towering, it has five distinct strata from canopy to forest floor, and consists of numerous species.

Pukeiti has the greatest plant diversity of any reserve in western Taranaki. Many of these plants have tropical features, for example the woody climbers and epiphytes – plants which perch in the branches and crowns of other plants, or grow on the spongy trunks of treeferns. Some, like the giant rata (*Metrosideros robusta*), are among the tallest trees in the forest and emerge from the canopy, appearing as stag-horns above it, having started life as epiphytes, mainly on rimu. As they have grown they have sent roots down the trunk of the host to the ground. The roots ultimately coalesce, forming what looks like a trunk surrounding the host, which it ultimately out-lives.

These are only one group of many varied epiphytes at Pukeiti. Most are ferns, for example there are eleven filmy ferns (*Hymenophyllum*) some of which are no bigger than a thumb nail; the kidney fern and two relatives; three epiphytic spleenworts (*Asplenium*), and the leather leaf fern (*Pyrossia*). There are five species of orchid (including *Earina*, *Winika* and *Ichthyostoma*); three perching lilies (*Astelia*); two woody shrubs (*Brachyglottis* and *Griselinia*) and of course lichens, mosses and liverworts.

Epiphytes are usually light demanders and do not thrive on the relatively dark forest floor but do need a wet climate with a high level of humidity. However, the canopies of the trees and their branches on which the epiphytes grow are well drained and can dry out, resulting in some species having developed special features to cope with the sometimes-dry conditions. *Astelia*, for example store water in their leaf bases and even develop a soil layer in which other plants grow; the ferns *Asplenium* and *Pyrossia* have succulent tissues; others like *Hymenophyllum* have fronds barely two cells thick which curl up after drying out but are rapidly hydrated as soon as it rains, absorbing water through a network of root-like structures.

Pukeiti deserves the by-line of 'a temperate rain-forest'!

*continues*

There are several epiphytes among the rhododendron species at Pukeiti. While not growing on living trees they do supremely well on tree stumps and ponga logs in situations where they get high rainfall, good drainage and appropriate light. Among them are members of the maddenia, species such as *R. williamsianum* and vireyas. Some species of the latter have had to be moved around in the Vireya Houses to find the places where they are most happy, getting enough light, adequate drainage and being tropical, warmth.

In the home garden, growing these in pots or on a well drained bank with plenty of light, warmth and moisture should give good results.

## Head Gardener

A new Head Gardener has been appointed and has rapidly become attuned to his tasks. Simon Barton, initially a teacher, learned his gardening skills in an eight-year on-the-job training scheme, and was recently the gardener at Kauri Cliffs Golf Course at Matauri Bay, North Auckland.

We welcome him!



### DISCOUNTS AT RAINFOREST EATERY

Graham, Yvette, Chad and Laura continue to offer a 10% discount on café purchases and the TRC continue to match this on anything purchased from the shop, on presentation of a valid membership card. The café is currently open 10am – 4pm Wednesday to Sunday. From June - September it will only open Friday to Sunday. They often open on public holidays and during the school holidays. Phone: 06-752 4143 if you wish to check before arriving.



*R. tuba* a vireya species

## From the Members' Committee

The COVID and Weather Gods conspired with each other to cause us to cancel our first two events of the year, but we did go ahead with the Autumn Members' Day albeit in a vastly reduced format. Covid reticence amongst the general population was resulting in small numbers attending social gatherings. We wanted to hold an event again at Pukeiti for those members who were ready to mix and socialise more, but we decided to keep it low key in anticipation that we would get fewer members attending than normal.

Graham Smith took a walk up to the Keiller Block and back, deviating from the straight and narrow wherever there was a point of interest close by which, I understand, was quite often. It must have been as the walkers didn't get back until nearly 12:30 and their demeanour showed how much they had enjoyed it. We all had brought our own lunch and had it either outside around the sculpture or in the Atrium. Just as we were packing up and leaving, the drizzle started to fall.

The Plant List Sale continues to be well supported and the quality of the plants we are now getting from Tawa Glen Nursery and Pukeiti is excellent. A big thanks to those who ordered plants for paying so promptly.

## Upcoming Events.

### AN AUTUMN WALK SUNDAY MAY 15

A walk with Lynn Bublitz looking at, and learning about, the epiphytes that call Pukeiti Rainforest their home.

The walk will leave from The Lodge at 10:00am and is followed by refreshments in the Douglas Cook Room.

This walk is open to the public so please invite anyone you think would be interested in hearing about these special forest residents.

### THE LODGE WORKING BEE WEDNESDAY, JUNE 08

The Library is looking wonderful with all the books now catalogued and shelved. From June 08, on every Wednesday, we will have it open from 1pm – 3pm for members to come up to Pukeiti, rest and read books in the library and borrow books to take home with them.

If you are interested in being involved with keeping the library in working order and maybe even taking a turn on a Wednesday afternoon helping with book loans, Lynn Bublitz will be taking a training session on June 08 showing interested members what is involved.

Recently I was sorting through the cutlery in the kitchen and noticed much

of it is in dire need of a good clean and polish. Now we're talking stainless steel cutlery not silver, so it is not a big, tedious job, but we need 1 or 2 people simply because of the sheer number of utensils we have. If anyone is free on the afternoon of June 08 and would like to help please turn up at The Lodge after lunch (around 1pm) with 2 or 3 tea towels and we should be able to sit around the tables and polish it off rather quickly. Of course, afternoon tea will be served to our wonderful volunteers.

If enough volunteers turn up some of us will also be able to clean and condition the leather furniture which, after nearly 10 years of use, needs a little TLC.

We hope some of you can come up and help us. Many hands make light work and an enjoyable social afternoon.

### **MID-WINTER LUNCH** **SATURDAY, JUNE 18**

Many of the members who responded to the questionnaire Anne distributed last year felt that not all events had to be held up at Pukeiti. Winter at Pukeiti is often wet and can be cold and the 2 mid-winter lunches we held in town when The Lodge was unavailable were very successful. We have therefore decided this year to have our mid-winter gathering in town at The Plymouth International Hotel. Please note that we need to know if you are attending by June 06 (Labour Day). This is much earlier than the date given in the last newsletter and calendar, but it is the timeline the hotel works on. Details of this lunch follow.

**Venue:** The Plymouth International Hotel, 220 Courtenay Street, New Plymouth. **Cost:** \$45.00pp

Please arrange to meet in the bar around 11:45 for social time. (Drinks at your own expense.). The meal will be served in the Orangery at 12:30. After lunch, Glynn Church will be talking to us on the topic of 'Native Plants: where to from here?'

**RSVP** and special dietary requests to Heather Robson, Phone: (06) 7572460 (A message can be left on this number.) Email: cattrobson@gmail.com

**PLEASE BOOK by MONDAY, JUNE 06**

To confirm this booking, payment must also be received by Wednesday, 08 June.

Please pay by internet banking to: Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust.  
Account Number: 15 3953 0497531 00  
Use your name and 'Lunch' as a reference

*Please note if we need to cancel this because of changes to the Covid settings, refunds will be given.*

### **WINTER WALK** **AROUND PUKEITI** **SUNDAY, JULY 17**

A walk with Rene learning about some of the medicinal uses of native plants.

### **PROPAGATION DAY** **AT PUKEITI** **WEDNESDAY, JULY 20**

A morning when we propagate plants in preparation for later Members' Sales.

We start at the Staff Quarters at 9:00am, your help is welcome, and if you are able to assist could you please notify Heather in advance so we can prepare for the numbers who will arrive. Email: cattrobson@gmail.com

### **SOUP AND ROLL** **LUNCH** **SUNDAY, AUGUST 21**

A walk around the large- leafed rhododendrons followed by a warming lunch in the Douglas Cook Room.

Meet in The Lodge. A guided walk will leave at 11:00am. Closer to the time and through the August Monthly Update we will notify you about whether or not the Mobility Vehicle will be available for our less mobile members.

After the walk, we will continue the tradition started by Bev and George, of homemade soups and a roll being available in the Douglas Cook Room.

### **WORKING BEES**

These have started again so if you have a few hours to spend on a Wednesday morning, turn up at the Staff Quarters at 9:00 am with secateurs, a weeding implement and a bucket. If you're feeling particularly energetic (destructive?) bring loppers and a saw as well. The staff are adept at finding native seedlings that need taming. The staff can provide us with most of the implements we will need but it does make it easier if we can bring some of our own.

## **MEMBERS' GARDENS VISITS**

**SEPTEMBER 18**

Details of the day and the gardens to be visited will be in the next newsletter but this is a reminder to keep this day free.

Covid is still with us much as we wish it was all over - we are certainly over it! We just don't know what course it will take from here, so all events are organised with the caveat that whether they go ahead or not will be confirmed closer to the day. We plan to make a final decision on each event about 10 days beforehand. If it is cancelled, members will be notified by email. Those without email can either check with another member or ring Heather (06 757 2460). If the event proceeds, it will be held in accordance with any current Covid restrictions and as all venues will be well ventilated, please dress accordingly. Most health experts are still recommending you use a mask when inside. If you are at all unwell, have a cold, hay fever or Covid symptoms we ask you to not attend.

## **Pukeiti Library**

will be open each Wednesday  
1pm - 3pm beginning June 08  
for members to borrow books  
and access historic publications.



R. 'Fireman Jeff' flowering at the entrance to the garden

## PLANTS of Interest

### *Rhododendron* 'Dr Hermann Sleumer'

*R. 'Dr Hermann Sleumer'* is a natural hybrid of *R. konori* var. *phaeopleum* x *zoelleri* from New Guinea. The seed was collected in Irian Jaya by Dr Sleumer in 1965 and grown and registered by Tom Lelliot, Australia.

It is named after Professor Sleumer, the collector who did significant work on the early classification of vireyas. Much of his research was done using dried herbarium specimens and was the foundation of the modern classification which has now been expanded and altered with new information. He did, however, fully realise the potential of vireyas as horticultural plants and he was responsible for some notable introductions including this one.

The plant is a medium sized, open bushy shrub up to 2m in height. It has medium sized flowers, deep pink with a creamy white tube and throat held in a loose truss and with a strong carnation scent. Flowers once or twice a year in big flushes.

It is on the immediate right as one enters the Kokopu House at Pukeiti.



### *Justicea aurea*

*Justicea aurea*, also known as Brazilian plume flower and Yellow Jacobinea is native to the Cerrado vegetation of Brazil. It is an upright evergreen shrub with huge dark green, ovate leaves 10 – 30cm long and showy golden-yellow flower plumes 15-25cm long. The lush foliage and distinctive flowers lend a tropical look to gardens.

Although not growing at Pukeiti I was given a plant by a Pukeiti member 2-3 years ago and it is flowering beautifully in my garden at present, brightening up a shady corner. There is a lovely specimen on the right as you enter Brooklands Park.

Peter Catt



*Rhodochiton* 'Saxon Blush' an Os Blumhardt hybrid using as one parent *R. saxifragoides* collected by Graham Smith in Papua New Guinea



*R. dalhousiae* var. *rhabdotum*

## A snap shot of Pukeiti's History

I have decided to start a regular column covering what was happening with Pukeiti 70 years ago, 50 years ago and 35 years ago. I will glean this information from many sources including past newsletters, Board papers and sub-committee minutes in storage at Puke Ariki. Sometimes there may have been a lot of points to cover, other times there may have been very little of note happening. I give no promise that this will be a complete record but I will endeavour to make it accurate and relevant. If this is appreciated I will do one each newsletter. So here is the first entry.

### Pukeiti - 50 Years Ago - 1972

At Board level: In October through the persistence and hard work of Stuart Peterson, Geoff Broker, and Dick Morpeth, Pukeiti gained a major tax concession. Gifts made to Pukeiti during a donor's lifetime would be exempt from Gift Duty. This meant 100% of the money gifted went to Pukeiti, making it a more attractive proposition for donors. Along with the formation of the Trust Fund the previous October this change helped ensure the perpetuity of Pukeiti.

In the garden the Southern border running along the right-hand side of The Lodge Lawn had been redesigned.

It now had *Rhododendron saluenense*, *R. rhabdotum*, *R. 'Sirius'*, *R. 'Lemon Lodge'*, *R. mucronulatum*, *R. aberconwayi* and *R. makinoi* interspersed with *Boenninghausenia albiflora*, *Camellia tsai*, *Daphne genkwa*, *Fothergilla gardenii* and *Viburnum davidii*.

Pukeiti agreed to give the American Species Foundation financial assistance for 5 years to both support a kindred organisation and to benefit in the future by receiving from them, first class stock with which to enhance Pukeiti's own collection.

Stock collected by Graham Smith on his British Isles trip in 1971 had been released from quarantine and a further 300 scions were still to arrive.

Members: The newsletter editorial bemoaned the static membership and suggested ways of increasing it. Is this familiar?

In April Mr Ron Gordon (the Chairman of the Trust) was to lead a World Garden Tour visiting Britain, USA and Italy. This was offered to members and members of the NZRA.

Mr Stuart W. Peterson, the Patron for the last 4 years passed away, unfortunately just months before the gift duty exemption he fought so hard for was granted. Mr Peterson was instrumental in establishing the financial viability of the Trust. Sir Russell Matthews was appointed the new Patron.

Life membership was conferred on Mr Fred Parker. He designed and built the brick terraces behind the Lodge which

complemented so well the terraces at the front of The Lodge. The planting of the conical conifers in the turrets, that are still looking good, was his concept. Mr Parker was also a proficient propagator and he provided Pukeiti with many choice and rare specimens.

### KIWI UPDATE



The kiwi breeding programme in the Taranaki Kohanga Kiwi At Rotokare, a partnership between the Taranaki Kiwi Trust and the Rotokare Reserve Trust, near Eltham, has been so successful that for 3 years now they have had 'surplus' birds to release in pest free areas around the Mounga.

The translocations are made possible by hundreds of volunteers working alongside staff from the two trusts and the Taranaki Mounga Project, Department of Conservation and the Kaitake Ranges Conservation Trust.

After the success of last year's kiwi release from Pukeiti into the Kaitake ranges, 10 more kiwi were released from Pukeiti in March this year. We hope they are as successful as last year's kiwi.

Please mark these dates  
in your calendar. Some  
dates and details have been  
changed so check carefully\*

# Members' Activities

# 2022

**SUNDAY, MAY 15**

## The Epiphytes calling Pukeiti Rainforest Home

Take a walk with Lynn and learn about these clever plants. Walk leaves The Lodge at 10:00am and is followed by refreshments in the Douglas Cook Room.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 18**

## Mid-winter Lunch

RSVP by June 06 and payment by June 08.  
See details under Upcoming Events in this newsletter

**SUNDAY, JULY 17**

## Medicinal Uses of Native Plants

Take a walk with Rene and learn how these plants have been used over the centuries for the benefit of human health and wellbeing.

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 20**

## Propagation Workshop

Prepare plants for later Members' Sales.  
Your help is welcome at Pukeiti from 9am.

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 21**

## Soup and Roll Lunch

A walk round the large-leafed rhododendrons followed by a homely lunch in the Douglas Cook Room.  
See details under Upcoming Events in this newsletter

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18**

## Garden Visits

A selection of Taranaki gardens open for members to visit. *More details later.*

**FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER -  
FRIDAY 02 DECEMBER**

## Pukeiti Tour to the Chatham Islands

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15**

## Spring Members' Day & AGM

*Details later in the year.*

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28 -  
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 06**

## 2022 Taranaki Garden Festival

Volunteers are needed for hosting in The Lodge and membership recruitment.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20**

## Pukeiti Rhododendrons and where they Originated.

Our final public walk of the year will take you around the garden discussing where in the world some of our rhododendrons originally came from. Walk leaves from The Lodge at 10:00am followed by refreshments in the Douglas Cook Room.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10**

## Christmas BBQ

RSVP Thursday, December 08

## Members' Committee meetings

Tuesday, August 16 - 9:30am - The Lodge  
Tuesday, November 15 - 9:30am - The Lodge

## Board meetings

The dates of the June, October and December meetings are to be confirmed.

**FRIDAY, 04 NOVEMBER -  
MONDAY, 07 NOVEMBER**

## Rhodenza 2022

The New Zealand Rhododendron Association Inc. Conference is being held in Gore (2 nights) and Queenstown (1 night). *Details will be provided later.* Pukeiti Members are welcome to attend.



**Pukeiti**

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.



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[www.pukeiti.org.nz](http://www.pukeiti.org.nz)  
is worth a look!

TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL

[www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz)

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