



Pukeiti NEWSLETTER

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.

www.pukeiti.org.nz

Maintaining Biodiversity at Pukeiti

Rhododendron laguniculicarpum

Conserving Threatened Species

An *ex situ* Conservation Strategy for *Rhododendron* in New Zealand

The New Zealand *Rhododendron ex situ* Conservation Project is a collaboration between scientists, collection holders, botanists and conservation authorities in New Zealand and internationally. The aim is to analyse *Rhododendron* collections in New Zealand in relation to those held globally, and to develop management strategies, nationally and for individual collections, that contribute to the conservation of *Rhododendron* species. The project is led by Marion MacKay of Massey University, and participants include Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust, Taranaki Regional Council and New Zealand Rhododendron Association. International links are maintained to the Global *Rhododendron* Conservation Consortium (UK), the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

(USA) and other international groups associated with *Rhododendron* conservation.

Ex situ conservation (where species that are at risk of extinction in their native habitat are conserved by growing them in living collections in botanic gardens or similar sites) sits within the framework of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation and its 16 Targets, but particularly Target 8 which aims to have 75% of threatened species held in *ex situ* collections by 2020¹. Key factors for success in *ex situ* conservation are presence of a range of genetically diverse plants of wild-source origin, correct identification and labelling of each individual plant, detailed and accurate record keeping, and skilled cultivation to ensure successful growth and excellent plant health.

Rhododendron is a complex genus of some 1300 taxa (species, subspecies and varieties), of northern hemisphere origin. Taxa are found from lowland subtropical forest to alpine tundra, and have growth habits ranging from forest trees to epiphytes and creeping swamp plants. Recent conservation assessments, using international conservation criteria, resulted in 730 taxa being Red Listed², that is, those species are deemed to be at risk or threatened with extinction in their native habitat. Cultivation in *ex situ* collections is one way to conserve Red List taxa; 1002 taxa are in cultivation internationally², with some 500 taxa present in New Zealand collections including Red List taxa³ and

several hundred individual accessions of wild-source origin.

The broad aims of the New Zealand project are to (i) analyse the range of taxa held in New Zealand collections, including taxa that have been present historically, (ii) propagate and disperse those taxa that are held on limited sites, (iii) work with collection holders to analyse individual collections and develop management strategies that facilitate the conservation of threatened taxa held at those sites, e.g. increasing the diversity of each taxon held, (iv) use laboratory analysis, when appropriate, to assess identity and genetic diversity of collections, and (v) work with international associates to assist with conservation of *Rhododendron* taxa globally.

Key activities for participating sites in this project include:

- Collaborating with the project team to analyse the collection at that site and determine its significance for conservation, including the identification of taxa that should be propagated.
- Ensuring accurate plant identification and labelling, with an associated set of detailed records so that individual plants can be located, propagated as necessary, and tracked when sent to other collections.
- Working with the project team to determine a programme of collection development, propagation, and collection administration appropriate to that collection.
- Collaborating with the project team, and other New Zealand collections, to develop a network of suitable sites in New Zealand that together can successfully conserve the range of *Rhododendron* taxa held in New Zealand.

Project leader: Marion MacKay (Massey University) m.b.mackay@massey.ac.nz

Project team: Doug Thomson (Dunedin Botanic Garden), Graham Smith (Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust), Andrew Brooker (Taranaki Regional Council), Sue Davies (New Zealand Rhododendron Association)

Project partner representatives: Gordon Bailey (Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust), Greg Rine (Taranaki Regional Council), Joy O'Keefe (New Zealand Rhododendron Association)



Andrew Brooker and Graham Smith check the cuttings propagated as part of the *ex situ* programme

¹ Botanic Gardens Conservation International. 2012. The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation: 2011-2020. Published by Botanic Gardens Conservation International for the Convention on Biological Diversity.

² MacKay M, Hootman S, Smith G, Thomson D, Gardiner S, Smith P. 2018. Updated global analysis for *ex situ* conservation of *Rhododendron* L. (Ericaceae). Report to Botanic Gardens Conservation International (London); Massey University.

³ MacKay MB, Smith GF, Gardiner SE. 2017. New Zealand collections of *Rhododendron* as a resource for *ex situ* conservation. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 55(2): 193-214. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.2017.1291434>

Rhododendron tuba

R. tuba is a vireya rhododendron from Mt Daymen, SE Papua New Guinea, growing at an altitude of 2500 to 3000m.

It has long tubular flowers that are white or white with a touch of pink and very pleasantly scented. It tends to flower en masse once a year in late autumn and lightens up the garden at a time when there is less in flower.

It is easy to grow in a frost free situation and is a reliable plant.



Toutouwai Back with a Song of Joy

The return of toutouwai (North Island robin) to Pukeiti after a century or more is cause for celebration on more than one level.

The little songsters have been seen on multiple occasions near Founders Café. It's great news for all of us who value our precious biodiversity, especially species like this which are found only in New Zealand and have been in decline. They'd been extinct from Egmont National Park for 112 years.

Their return also vindicates the intensive predator control taking place in and around Pukeiti, and shows us what success looks like. If we keep up the momentum, we can look forward to these and other native biodiversity treasures recovering and thriving.

Pukeiti is literally the front line in Restore Kaitake, part of the wider Towards Predator-Free Taranaki project. A virtual barrier of 1300 traps is strung across the width of the property so that it and the area below, all the way to the sea, can become a Zero Possum Zone.

It's a bold plan but it's been achieved elsewhere on a smaller scale. And these aren't just any traps. They're monitored

wirelessly, so trappers need focus only on the ones that need attention. And they can be turned on and off remotely and automatically – so they're left off during the day when possums aren't active but innocent two-legged creatures are.

Meanwhile, the Taranaki Mouna Project is leading an intensive rat-trapping program in a 1000 hectare block on the north eastern side of Mount Taranaki below North Egmont, with 2160 self-resetting A24 gas powered traps, creating a safe environment for robin to survive and breed. Almost 100 robin have now been released in this safe area since 2017.

Their sighting at Pukeiti, 15km away, shows that with predator control, robins are breeding and spreading to other areas. This is what we can expect to see more of as our community works together removing predators as part of Towards Predator-Free Taranaki.

With Restore Kaitake gathering pace, we can expect to see more such wins. Communities and schools and farmers have been mobilised and backyard trapping is the talk of the town in Oakura and Okato. The return of other native birds, such as kākā and kiwi, is

no longer just a dream.

Because the terrain here is so rugged, 1080 bait remains a highly effective tool and is being used on Egmont National Park and some adjacent land. For more information about this bait, visit www.1080facts.co.nz.

You can help.

Get involved in Restore Kaitake and/or the wider Towards Predator-Free Taranaki, and encourage your friends and family to as well. Go to www.trc.govt.nz/pf-taranaki2050 or look for Restore Kaitake and Towards Predator-Free Taranaki on Facebook.

By Stephen Hall

Director-Operations, Taranaki Regional Council



Mid Winter Lunch

Midday Saturday, June 22 2019

Cost \$45.00pp

The mid-winter lunch will be held in The Lodge for the first time.

A mouth watering sounding three course, buffet style dinner, prepared by Karen and Graham Chard from the cafe, will be served in the Douglas Cook Room.

Please arrive by 11.45 for mulled wine, (fruit juice will also be available) and social time. The meal will be served at 12:30 and you may BYO wine if you wish. After lunch Graham Smith will give an illustrated talk about his recent stay with a Chinese family, during which time he shared with them their Chinese New Year celebrations and family trip south towards the Lao border.

CAR POOLING: If you want to car pool, meet at the Tupare Car Park, Mangorei Road @ 11:00am to organise drivers and then drive up to Pukeiti via Branch Road.

RSVP and special dietary requests, to Diane Jordan, 453 Maude Road, RD1 New Plymouth, 4371. Phone: (06) 752 2800, mobile: 0211293547 Email jordy@primowireless.co.nz

Please book by Friday, 14 June. Please note change of date. To confirm this booking, payment must be received by Wednesday, 19 June.

We prefer you pay by direct credit via internet banking.

Please make payment to TSB Bank Account 15-3953-0497531-00. Write 'dinner' in the particulars box and use your name as reference.

If paying by cheque please make it out to Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust and post it to Diane. Please allow plenty of time for your cheque to arrive by the 19th of June.

We look forward to seeing you.



**Please mark
these dates on
your calendar**

Members' Activities

2019

Volunteering in the Garden

On any Wednesday that suits, meet up with the regular Wednesday volunteers outside the staff quarters at 9:00 to help with the garden maintenance.
Any help is very welcome.

Propagation Workshop

Wednesday, July 24
Meet in propagation area.

Members' Committee Meetings

Tuesday, August 13 - The Lodge
Tuesday, November 19 - The Lodge



Bookings for The Lodge facilities and Studio can be made on the TRC website

[www.trc.govt.nz/gardens/venue-hire-and-tours/
pukeiti-studio-accommodation/](http://www.trc.govt.nz/gardens/venue-hire-and-tours/pukeiti-studio-accommodation/)

Board Meetings

Saturday June 22 – 9:00am, Board Room, The Lodge
Saturday October 12 – 9:00am, Board Room, The Lodge



Pukeiti

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.



Postal address: PO Box 1066
New Plymouth 4340

Location: 2290 Carrington Rd. RD4

Secretary
Anne Howard Phone 021 0831 5444
pukeiti@pukeiti.com

Chairperson
Gordon Bailey gordon.bailey@codc.govt.nz



ACTIVITIES

SATURDAY JUNE 22

Mid-winter Lunch

Saturday June 22, Douglas Cook Room, Pukeiti Lodge.
Please book by Friday, June 14. Please note
this date has changed to an earlier day.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 17

Soup and Roll Lunch

followed by a Winter walk around the garden.
Pukeiti Lodge 10:00am

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Members' Garden Visits

A selection of South Taranaki Gardens have
been selected for members to visit.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12

Spring Members' Day & AGM

Details later in the year

TUESDAY OCTOBER 29 –

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 01

Rhododendron Conference, Rotorua

Details are on the NZRA website. Early bird
registrations close September 01.

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 01 –

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10

2019 Taranaki Garden Festival

Volunteers needed for hosting at The Lodge.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14

End of Year BBQ

Please book with Diane (06) 7522800; 0211293547 or
jordy@primowireless.co.nz by Thursday, December 12

TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL

www.trc.govt.nz

Office hours	Mon-Fri 8am - 5pm	Environmental hotline	0800 736 222
Postal address	Private Bag 713, Stratford 4352	Regional gardens	regional.gardens@trc.govt.nz
Location	47 Cloten Road, Stratford 4332	Greg Rine	Phone: (06) 765 7127 Mobile: 027 240 2470
Phone	0800 736 222 (06) 765 7127	Andrew Brooker	Phone: (06) 765 7127 or Phone (06) 752 4141 Mobile 0210 264 4060
Email	info@trc.govt.nz		

Pukeiti News



Jenny Laird



Teresa Parry

Garden Staff changes

Both Jenny Laird and Teresa Parry have resigned and left Pukeiti for other employment. Their work at Pukeiti in establishing the Keiller Garden and Vireya Covered Walk, respectively, has drawn much favorable comment. The Trust thanks them and wishes them every success in the future. Their replacements have been appointed. Interviews have also been held for a new Head Gardener to replace Andrew whose new role of Collections and Project Officer will in part focus his talents on the *Rhododendron* collection, working with the Trust on the *ex situ* project.

Board Member Changes

Board members : Lynn Bublitz and Neville Stewart retire by rotation. Both are eligible for re-election and others interested should complete nomination forms which can be obtained from the secretary at pukeiti@pukeiti.com

Neil Tapsell and Dr Susan Davies have been appointed to the Board. Both bring new sets of skills to the table.

Membership Subscriptions

These remain the same as last year, \$30. Accounts will be sent in July. A number were not paid last year and those members will not receive further newsletters nor this year's *Rhododendron Journal*. The Trust still would appreciate your continued support particularly as we continue with the *ex situ* project which goes some way in reversing the reduction in biodiversity, highlighted so prominently recently, by conserving endangered species of rhododendrons.

Newsletter posting

Many of you will be aware of the problems arising from the continued downgrading of postal services. For the last 2 years, I have been very aware that some people who order plants have been disadvantaged due to intermittent delivery by our postal services and the subsequent length of time it has taken for the newsletter to arrive at their addresses.

Starting with the next issue, you will be able to receive newsletters and other notices by email rather than by post. If you would like to change to email let Anne Howard, our Board Secretary, know by emailing her at pukeiti@pukeiti.com to update your record.

Members who do not have email facility will continue to receive their newsletters by mail. The *Rhododendron Journal* will, as usual, be posted.

Invitation

The Taranaki Rhododendron & Garden Group welcomes renowned plant breeders **DR KEITH HAMMETT & DHARINI MARINKOVICH** and invites members of the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust to attend an informative presentation and get-together with our guests on Friday 21 June 2019.

This meeting of Pukeiti members, plus others from the parks, nursery and gardening fraternities, on Friday 21 June, will be held at New Plymouth Little Theatre, 29 Aubrey Street. The doors will open at 7.00pm to allow mingling and catch-up time.

Brief illustrated presentations will follow from both Dr Keith Hammett and Dharini Marinkovich about their collaborative plant breeding work. There will be plenty of time for questions, discussion and debate.

This meeting is by invitation and a door charge of \$10.00 per person will apply to help defray costs.

If you would like to attend, please RSVP to Karl Rossiter with names and numbers: Email: karl@rossiter.co.nz / Telephone or Text: 021 425 010. Seating is limited.

Pukeiti Visitors

Visitor numbers continue to grow. An estimated 85,000 visited in the last twelve months. Reviews last month on the TripAdvisor website by 265 travellers rated the visit as: Excellent 72% Very Good 24% Average 3% Poor 1%

Café Hours

The Rain Forest Café is now open during the winter months: Wednesday to Sunday 10am to 4pm

Pukeiti Tour

Graham Smith is presently initiating the planning for a three week tour to England next May to visit gardens, many of which have had a long association with Pukeiti. Details will be advertised in the next newsletter. Members interested should email the secretary. Further formation will be emailed to those interested as it comes to hand.

Garden Help

The Pukeiti staff are pulling together to try to keep the gardens looking good despite being acutely understaffed. They would welcome any help members can give at anytime but especially until new staff take up their positions. There are many activities we can help with and you can choose one that suits your physical abilities and interests. There is the usual contingent of volunteers on Wednesdays and Saturdays that you could join in with. If another day suits you better, your help would still be very much appreciated. Just ring the garden staff in advance to let them know you'll be coming.

Mid Winter Lunch - Saturday June 22. *It would be good to see you there*