



Pukeiti NEWSLETTER

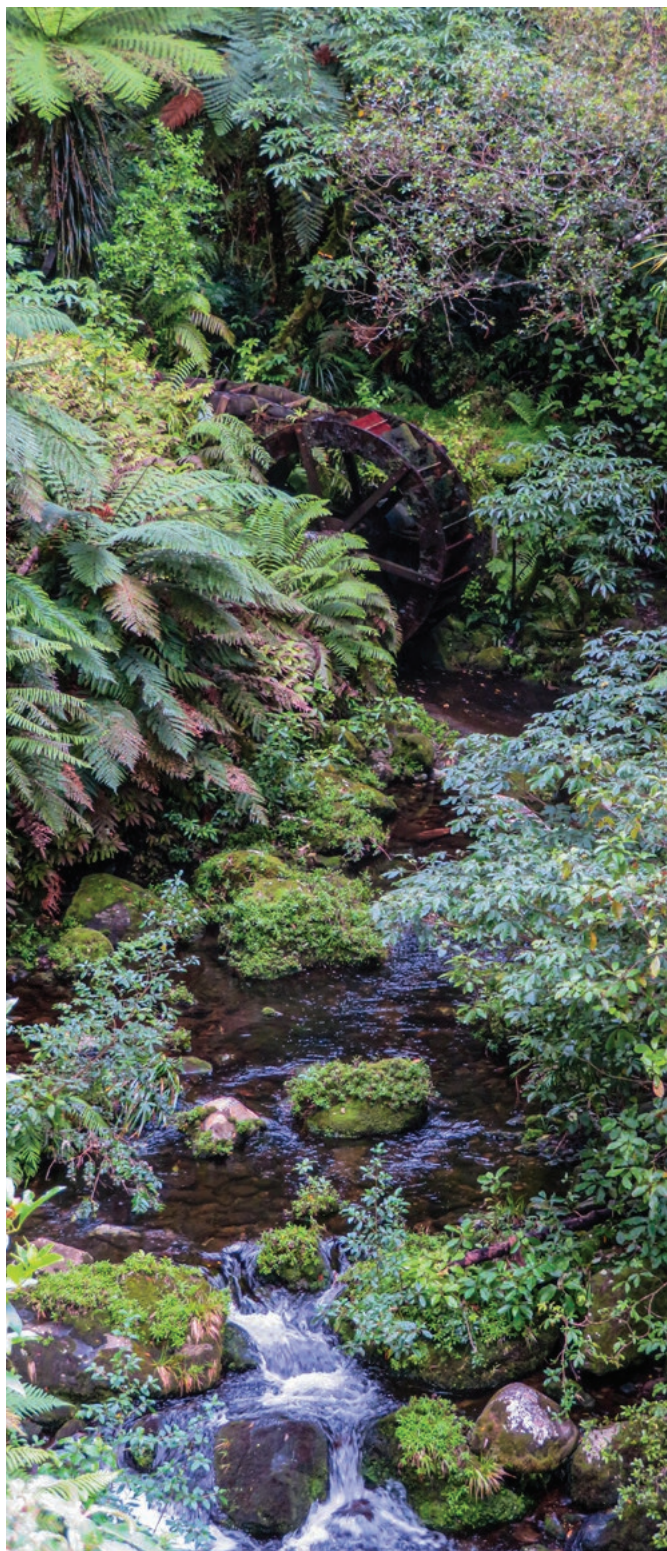
Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.

Rhododendrons in a Rainforest



www.pukeiti.org.nz

The Trust's purpose reviewed



What a challenging year 2021 was for us all. Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust was not immune. Cancellations of Board meetings, the AGM and other planned activities were necessary because of the various and changing Covid restrictions. Some members activities though, were held under the appropriate rules of the time.

One aspect of the programme delayed was a discussion meeting planned to review the Trust's activities and strategic direction, and consider its relevance acknowledging the work of the TRC with which the partnership agreement had been established. It is now over ten years since the ownership and management of the Pukeiti Gardens became the responsibility of the Council. And what a wonderful job they have done. Pukeiti is more vibrant and has more visitors than ever. Millions have been spent, metalling paths, rebuilding the vireya houses and Lodge, up-grading the gatehouse – now the Rain Forest Café – and continuing the maintenance and development of the garden including the construction of the Keiller Garden and Misty Knoll. A fitness trail is about to be opened, and a cycle path which will ultimately have Oakura as its destination is being planned. The education programme has been expanded: over 800 school pupils take part each year. Shelters throughout the garden are the focus of some of the conservation projects, many of which involve the rainforest (the bush as it is commonly known). A family hut has been built on the northern slope of Pukeiti Hill. Called the Piwakawaka Hut it is available for hire and many families have used it.

Annual visitor numbers have increased almost ten-fold since the partnership with the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust was enacted.

This begs the question, "What is the role of the Trust in this partnership and is it still relevant?"

The Heads of Agreement which details the partnership includes as guiding principles the objectives of the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust as a covenant to maintain and develop the gardens. The objectives which guided the Trust's activities are now those of the TRC and the basis of our relationship, which has been sound throughout the last ten years.

Prime among these objectives is:

'To encourage interest in the development of the Genus Rhododendron. Scientific research into its breeding and culture and the promotion of such other purposes as may advance the genus.'

continues

The meeting to discuss the on-going role of the Trust, planned for October last year and postponed because of Covid restrictions, was finally convened in January 2022, and involved Board, Members' Committee and Garden Forum members.

It became clear as the meeting progressed that the role of the Trust is to ensure that the special character of Pukeiti is retained. It is not just a well-maintained garden in a natural forest setting: what makes Pukeiti unique is its renowned collection of rhododendrons, responsible for Pukeiti's international reputation. Assisting the TRC to maintain this, using the prime objective as a guide, is now the major focus of the Trust. This involves the oversight of the collection by providing advice through the Garden Forum, leading the *ex-situ* programme which now has international support, assisting with the conservation of the species (and ultimately NZ raised hybrids) and supporting scientific research through university connections. To do this the Trust has provided additional financial support to the TRC, funded research, is redeveloping international connections, working closely with MPI to ensure legal requirements are met, developing Memoranda of Understandings with

other gardens, collecting and propagating plants from several private gardens, and working closely with Massey University and the NZRA.

The ultimate stage of the programme is to ensure that clones of species, particularly those endangered in the wild, are grown in conditions most suited to each of the species. Pukeiti is not suitable for all, thus the range of species will be distributed to gardens throughout the country forming a nationally dispersed collection. Records will be kept, and the health of the plants monitored. This will require on-going work and funding by the Trust.

Rhododendron species lost or endangered in the wild will be conserved and if regulations allow be reintroduced into their home countries.

Rhododendrons, of course, are not the sole reason for Pukeiti's reputation. It is its setting, the regenerating forest, enhanced by the way in which rhododendrons and other ornamental plants are displayed along a network of trails and clearings and in a dedicated display house, which give the gardens their special appeal. The forest has also been a focus of the Trust's activities over the years and hundreds of rimu have been planted throughout the rainforest.

The gardens, still conforming to the original plans, now, because of the work of the staff, have never looked better.

The Garden Forum has assisted in this by offering advice on the siting and husbandry of the collection. The Trust also provides an annual grant and additional funds to support approved projects. Over a million dollars has been passed to the TRC since the partnership agreement was signed.

Membership is critical to the strength and future of the Trust. The support and the passion of the earlier years which laid Pukeiti's foundations are still needed. A strong membership will ensure we have the capacity, strength and influence to fulfil our partnership obligations, and continue the support of on-going research and conservation programmes. Key to this is the advice and funding which the Trust provides which in turn will maintain an enduring relationship with the TRC. Our connections will also assist in promoting Pukeiti's high national and international reputation.

The Members' Committee will continue to do the utmost to secure and promote membership by providing a range of activities to broaden social connections, inspire interest through guided walks, garden tours, lectures and workshops. The annual plant sale will continue and progressively offer rare and unusual plants, some associated with the *ex-situ* collection. Members have the use of The Lodge, and the library will soon be open regularly to allow members to borrow books. Communications will be enhanced by monthly emailed up-dates of activities, the newsletter expanded, a website and social media platforms further developed.

It is clear that the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust still has a role in ensuring the retention of the special character of the Pukeiti Gardens; that it doesn't become just a pleasant place to have a walk, cycle, and picnic as happens in many other parks.

Thank you for your continued support.

Please encourage others to join.

We need a strong and committed membership to secure its future.

Lynn Bublitz



December flowering *R. decorum* grown from seed collected on Pukeiti's first trip to Yunnan, China in 1990 led by Ron Gordon.

Progress at Pukeiti with propagating NZ raised hybrids

Background:

As part of the initial development of the garden spaces at Pukeiti by Jack Goodwin in the 1950s, the Stead Block, named for former hybridist Edgar Stead, was developed and dedicated to the growing and celebrating of New Zealand raised rhododendron hybrids. Intended as the home for representations of all of these new hybrids it quickly filled, at a rate that at the time could not always keep up with the hybridising craze, and we now see some of the best and the biggest in other parts of the garden.

Undoubtedly a key component of the success of the Stead Block has been the renewal through propagation programme which is still very much a part of Pukeiti today, for in some cases there are still some 'one offs' in our collection, begging the question do we have a duty to preserve them?

Today:

To continue playing our part in the ongoing NZ Hybrid Conservation Programme that is one of the New Zealand Rhododendron Association's interesting undertakings, we have increased, albeit slowly, the propagation of some of the lesser known but indeed worthy specimens to enable their spread throughout the country, once the collection needs of Pukeiti have been met. For those less noteworthy or perhaps troubled plants which have few redeeming features we may be forced to make less favourable decisions, but nonetheless their existence as part of the Pukeiti collection is an important part of our historic record showing the development of the interest and passion in the genus.

Alongside the plantings at Pukeiti we have also been gathering propagating material from other

collections to both increase not only the Pukeiti collection but also the chances of survival of some great plants, many of which still need to be named and registered. The registering of some of this material is very much in the hands of the breeders and their families, and where necessary we continue to provide guidance through this process. Thankfully, it has become easier over time.

Registration of hybrids initially needed to be done through the Royal Horticultural Society in London, a process which was cumbersome and slow but at least ensured international recognition of one's work. Since the 1970s, New Zealand, through the NZRA, has had its own registrar which simplified the process resulting in a rush of registrations. This is still very much the case with the current registrar, Brian Coker, handling the work on our behalf. Certainly in this age of instant communication the whole process, whilst still involving a number of criteria to be met and recorded, is far less cumbersome and daunting.

The notion of registration in conservation is an interesting one, as in reality it preserves the chosen name only. What guarantee does it give for the plant's survival if only one or two people are growing it? I know I am guilty of registering a couple of hybrids while having no real interest in their broad distribution, but a seemingly



R. 'Koha' a vireya raised at Pukeiti.

selfish desire to keep them in the family, so to speak. But surely the best outcome is to share them with other gardeners as well, and this intent forms part of the propagation plan going forward. Another view might be that to register but have no distribution plan for the future just removes one more naming option for others. Interesting conundrums indeed.

For Pukeiti the decision has been clear. We initially embarked on a catch-up programme of formally registering hybrids named by the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust in recognition of their historic value to both the collection and the story of the garden and have had some exciting new releases that have made their way into the wider gardening realm through the Trust's Plants for Members scheme. These will, overtime as numbers increase, be released further afield for others to enjoy.

Andrew Brooker



R. 'Maddy Bern' raised at Pukeiti.

PLANTS of Interest at Pukeiti

R. 'Beverley McConnell'

R. 'Beverley McConnell' is a lovely hybrid raised by Graham Smith at Pukeiti. It is a cross of *R. konori* x 'Simbu Sunset' and first flowered in 1999. It has large funnel shaped flowers, cream in bud opening peach-pink to biscuit shading depending on season and temperature. It is sweetly scented as per its *R. konori* parentage. Graham named this hybrid in honour of Beverley who has been a great supporter of the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust for many years. Her garden Ayrilies in Whitford is rightly regarded as one of the best in New Zealand and she has also been instrumental in developing The Wetlands nature reserve nearby.



Eucryphia cordifolia

Eucryphia cordifolia, commonly known as Ulmo, is a broad columnar evergreen tree from the temperate rain forests of Southern Chile and Argentina. It will reach 15-20m high and up to 40m in the wild. It has dark green curved leaves and in February and March has lovely white flowers with terra-cotta stamens and is slightly aromatic. In its homeland it is a favourite of bees which produce a honey 'miel de Ulmo'.

Eucryphia is a genus with 7 species, 2 in South America and 5 in Australia. It is a member of the Cunoniaceae family which also includes our *Weinmannia*: kamahi and towai.

Flowered beautifully in Lynn Bublitz's front driveway during January.



Rhodochiton atrosanguinea The purple bell vine growing in the vireya houses at Pukeiti

From the Members' Committee

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2022.

We hope everyone has been able to relax and enjoy the wonderful summer weather we have been having although the rain that is falling this weekend is very welcome from a gardening point of view. Here in New Plymouth, albeit the sunniest city in New Zealand, rain fell on 4 days in January giving a total of 12.5ml. Yesterday alone we had 180ml, twice the normal rainfall for February.

Most of you will have received the 2022 Calendar of Events with the January Monthly Update that Anne emailed out. We have organised an event most months but of course whether they go ahead will be very dependent on what happens with Covid as the year progresses. Currently the Omicron variant seems to be somewhat thwarted by the good community uptake of vaccines and sensible hygiene precautions and is not taking off as fast as many experts predicted, but it is early days. With this in mind, closer to each event, we will decide whether it is safe and sensible for the event to proceed. 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 the current Covid restrictions and all event venues will be well ventilated, so please dress accordingly. Please also always bring your vaccine pass & a mask with you.

We have decided to again offer our traditional Members' activities - Spring & Autumn Members' Days and the Mid-winter Dinner, Soup and Roll day and Christmas BBQ as well as continuing to hold the public walks. This latter activity was introduced last year and proved successful not only in attracting members of the public but also appealing to a different group of members, many of whom don't normally come to our functions. We've split the events between Saturdays and Sundays to cater for the varying commitments of members.

We hope to see many of you up at Pukeiti during the year.

Upcoming events:

Unfortunately the first two event planned for the year have had to be cancelled. 'Drinks and Nibbles' because of a power outage at Pukeiti, and the 'Revive the Memories Day' reluctantly because of the expected wave of Omicron.

AUTUMN MEMBERS' DAY

SATURDAY APRIL 02

The Douglas Cook Room, The Lodge

The Board has decided to hold its next meeting by Zoom but we don't have to plan quite so far in advance and at this stage it looks as though we may still be able to get together for an autumn walk around the garden and a catch up with our Pukeiti friends over a pot-luck lunch in The Lodge.

10:00am: The Lodge will be open for members who want to drop things off before they go on the guided walk. People who ordered plants from the plant list will already have either picked up their plants or received them via courier but there will be some perennials for sale. Bring some petty cash so you can take advantage of choice plants that were not propagated in sufficient numbers to make the plant list.

10:30am: A guided walk will leave from The Lodge. Due to Covid restrictions, the TRC will not be operating the buggy.

12:00 noon: Meet back at The Lodge for a quick update on what's happening at Pukeiti and, in particular, progress made in the Library. This will be followed by the Potluck Lunch.

1.30pm – Glyn Church will speak on 'Native Plants - Where to from here?'.

GUIDED WALK

**SUNDAY MAY 15
10:00AM – 11:30AM**

Meet at The Lodge

Lynn Bublitz will take a guided walk into parts of the Pukeiti Rainforest, studying the epiphytes growing on the trees.

At the conclusion of the walk, tea, coffee and biscuits will be available in the Douglas Cook Room.

This walk is open to the public so please encourage family, friends and

neighbours to come along with you.

LODGE ACCESS:

Some of you will have noticed that for the last few months The Lodge has been locked. During the higher Covid alert and traffic light settings the TRC has, understandably, not wanted unsupervised public access to any of its facilities and so has kept The Lodge locked. This has had the unfortunate side effect that members have not been able to access our facilities in The Lodge.

This has now been sorted out and Trust members can again use The Lodge on a casual basis, although not rooms already in use by a group with a private booking. The Members' Lounge and the kitchen are always available for our use.

- TRC will post the booking schedule on the kitchen door each week for you to check before entering, so you minimise disruption to other groups using The Lodge.
- Access will be through the kitchen door at the back of The Lodge.
- The garden team will deactivate The Lodge alarm each morning at 8am and reset it each afternoon at 4pm, so that you only need to use the pin pad code on the kitchen door.
- Finally, as always, if you do use The Lodge, please ensure that you leave it clean and tidy and put back any chairs and tables as they were when you arrived.

WORKING BEES:

Currently these are suspended as the Pukeiti team is working in its own bubble which means that they are trying not to have visitors interacting with the team unless it is essential. Simon, the Head Gardener, hopes to shortly find a way of having we volunteers helping again whilst still keeping the garden staff in their own bubble and will let us know when that is possible. We will notify members, via Anne's monthly Member Update, when we can again go back up and help in the garden.

Plant Sale

Orders Close Friday 18 March

Please remember to get your orders in promptly to maximise your chances of getting the plants you want.

Payment by internet banking

As you did last year, when you receive your plants an invoice will come with them. Please pay this on receipt. Our account number for payment is 15 3953 0497531. Please use your name as reference and put 'plants' in the particulars box.

Plant Collection

Friday March 25:

Plants will be available for picking up from 12A Tamati Place, Merrilands, New Plymouth between the hours of 1:00pm and 5:00pm. If this does not suit you, alternative times can be arranged by ringing Heather on (06) 757 2460 or emailing cattrobson@gmail.com

Saturday April 02:

There will be no plant collections from Pukeiti this year. If you cannot arrange to pick up your plants from 12A Tamati Place, they will need to be couriered to your address. We have used the same couriers for years and apart from a couple of recent issues, related to pressure of the first COVID lockdown, they have been reliable and careful with the plants.

KIWI UPDATE:

Great news on the kiwi front. Toby Shanley reports that all 10 kiwi that were released between Pukeiti and the Kaitake Range last year are doing very well! They have all paired up and have established territories and all have attempted to nest. Three out of the five males (the males do the incubation of the eggs) have successfully hatched at least one chick. This result is even better than they had hoped for. One pair, Bouush & Haimona, have established their territory in an area that includes the far reaches of the large-leafed rhododendrons and out towards the outer track to the Piwakawaka Hut. Puanga & Aroha are right next door to them. The Kaitake Ranges Conservation Trust has a group of dedicated volunteers who track the kiwi on a weekly basis and they are now planning for the release of an additional 10 kiwi to boost the population this April. Maybe, sometime in the near future, members will be able to stay a night in the studio attached to The Lodge and listen to the night calls of kiwis.

DISCOUNTS AT RAINFOREST EATERY:

Graham, Yvette, Chad and Laura are continuing to offer a 10% discount on café purchases and the TRC is matching this on anything purchased from the shop, on presentation of a valid membership card. The café is open 10am-4pm daily, until the end of February. From March it is open Wednesday to Sunday.



MARK HARRIS PHOTOS:

During the last weekend of the Taranaki Garden Festival, Mark Harris, a local professional photographer with extensive international experience, held an exhibition of some of the photographic prints he'd taken of plants at Pukeiti. Shot around sunset, he has captured, in a most evocative way, the last of the day's light striking the large-leafed rhododendrons. The result is a collection of large atmospheric photographic prints showing these wonderful giants in a manner very different from how they are usually presented. I talked to him about the possibility of making them available to members and we decided the best way was just to direct you to his website.

So, if this has stoked your interest, check them out at www.markharris.co.nz click on 'Art for Sale' and then click on the photo of the rainforest centre. Enjoy.

PUKEITI TOUR TO THE Chatham Islands

25 NOVEMBER - 02 DECEMBER 2022

THE EASTERNMOST INHABITED PART OF THE WORLD'S EIGHTH CONTINENT - ZEALANDIA

Inclusive cost (approx.) NZD \$5000

Bev Ellis from helloworld Strandon has organised for us an 8 day tour to the Chathams, visiting the four corners of Chatham Island. We will visit all the main tourist highlights and experience the unique indigenous plant and animal life, the abundance of the ocean when we take a 2 hour fishing trip, spectacular scenery and interesting geological features, all whilst learning about the island's rich cultural heritage.

We are fortunate to be accompanied on this tour by an expert botanist - Amanda Baird. Amanda spent 21 years as a botanist for the Department of Conservation in the Chatham Islands. She is perfectly qualified to be able to show us the special Chatham Island flora and fauna that are not found in the wild anywhere else in the world.

The tour will leave from and finish in Wellington. You will be staying in 4.5 star accommodation right in the middle of the main town, Waitangi.

For the comfort of all on the tour the number is strictly limited to 22 people. Good news travels fast and several people have already expressed an interest in joining this tour so don't delay adding your name if you are interested in coming.

The trip will be led by Heather Robson and Peter Catt.

Contact them for further details at email cattrobson@gmail.com or Phone (06) 757 2460



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

Members' Activities

2022

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Drinks and nibbles in the garden

(out of the Douglas Cook Room), preceded by a guided walk around areas of seasonal interest in the garden.

CANCELLED

SATURDAY, MARCH 03

Revive the Memories Day

CANCELLED

SATURDAY, APRIL 02

Autumn Members' Day

10:00am – food drop off and plant sales

10:30 Garden Walk

12:00 Pot Luck Lunch in the Douglas Cook Room followed by a talk by Glyn Church

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 Lodge.

SATURDAY, JUNE 18

Mid-winter Lunch

RSVP by Wednesday June 15. *More details later.*

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. *More details later.*

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

Garden Visits

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

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 Lodge.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10

*Christmas BBQ

RSVP Thursday, December 08

Members' Committee meetings

Tuesday, May 03 – 9:30am – The Lodge
Tuesday, August 16 – 9:30am – The Lodge
Tuesday, November 15 – 9:30am – The Lodge

Board meetings

Saturday, April 02 – 9:00am, Zoom meeting
The dates of the June, October and December meetings are to be confirmed at the April Board Meeting.

**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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Taranaki
Regional Council

www.pukeiti.org.nz
is worth a look!

TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL

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