



Weedbusters!

www.weedbusters.org.nz

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Determined not to win the title of 'weediest island in the world', Waiheke residents are tackling their weed problem with a vengeance.

Waiheke Weedbusters declare war on weeds

Waiheke Island has gone Weedbusters mad, with community efforts supported by a team from Waiheke Weedfree Trust, Auckland City Council, Auckland Regional Council, Forest & Bird, and the Department of Conservation.

A recent month long competition, where every ten moth plant pods brought into the Waiheke Transfer Station won the resident an entry into a prize draw, resulted in 8000 pods, each containing hundreds of seeds, being collected and disposed of.

"It was a staggering response," says Gary Wilton, Parks Officer for Auckland City Council.

"We hoped it would be good, but it exceeded all expectations."

Competition winners, Go Girls Gardening, were delighted with their prize of a \$250 Placemakers

voucher and a Weedbusters kit of similar value, containing hand pruners, secateurs, gloves, books, and weed bags.

"We have a serious problem with some really invasive weeds on this island and Weedbusters is a bit like an ambulance, it has come to Waiheke at a critical time," says Waiheke Community Board chair, Ray Ericson, who presented the prizes.

"It is a fantastic movement uniting government and local bodies with communities in the fight against weeds."

The next competition on Waiheke will be launched at the end of June, with the announcement of the next weed to be tackled.

*Jenness Reeve
Waiheke Weedbusters*



Gary Wilton (Auckland City Council), Flynn Washington (Forest & Bird/Waiheke Weedfree Trust), Ray Ericson (chair, Waiheke community board), competition winner Kay Bentham (Go Girls Gardening), Brian Griffiths (Forest & Bird/Waiheke Weedfree Trust), and Petra White (Waiheke Weedfree Trust). Photo: Jenness Reeve.

**Working together
to protect New Zealand**

Ghastly grasses greedy for space



Manchurian wild rice has invaded Dargaville's rivers.

While grasses used as pasture species keep New Zealand's agriculture healthy, some large exotic grasses are proving to be less beneficial for our environment. There are a few that are so big, so tough, and so greedy for space that they are a menace to the natural areas where they establish.

Manchurian wild rice (*Zizania latifolia*) is thought to have come to New Zealand in the 1800s in mud bricks used by Chinese merchant sailors as ballast in their boats. Since that time, it has established along the West Coast of Northland, especially around Dargaville, where it covers both sides of the harbour inlets. There are also areas of it in Paeroa and the Bay of Plenty. So far it has proved too tough for any control methods that have been tried on it.

Pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*, *C. jubata*) was originally introduced to New Zealand as a

stock fodder. Unfortunately, it started to spread so rapidly, and colonise some areas so thoroughly, that it is now banned from sale in New Zealand and is required to be controlled in some areas of the country.

Arrow bamboo (*Pseudosasa japonica*) is also proving to be a problem, both in urban areas where it escapes from gardens into reserves and gullies, and in natural areas where it has been dumped. It forms dense thickets that crowd out other plants, and sends out runners that help infestations increase in both density and size.

As similar problems can be caused with some of the smaller-sized introduced ornamental grasses, it's important that you are 100% sure that those you grow in your garden aren't weedy species.

Check out the Weedbusters weed search at www.weedbusters.org.nz for more information.

Giant reed grass goes down a treat

Auckland Zoo's elephants, Kashin and Burma, were in for a whopping great treat when they were presented with a trailerload of giant reed (*Arundo donax*) by Weedfree Waitakere Trust, as part of their War on Weeds project.

Giant reed is a major problem along Waitakere waterways, rapidly smothering streambanks. It is one of the fastest growing terrestrial plants in the world, growing almost 10cm a day. It is also difficult to control and doesn't break down very well, so composting is out of the question.

Once Weedfree Waitakere's Community Project Manager Neil Henderson discovered pachyderms are partial to a bit of this giant invader, eating up to 200kg of in a day, it was no problem keeping them supplied with this special weedy treat!



Photo: Neil Henderson



In the thick of it...

One of the strengths of Weedbusters as an interagency programme is that it allows people to go outside corporate norms and think of different ways to reach their target audiences.

It never fails to amaze me how outgoing some usually staid and serious folk can become when encouraged to think outside the square and do something different. Their creativity suddenly comes out, and they come up with some of the most brilliant ideas.

From Giant Ginger Bashes to Moth Plant Mountains, from Pampas Purgues to Boneseed Busting, the sheer variety and scope of some of the weedbusting events that have been up for offer over the last couple of years has been inspiring.

The response from communities to this novel approach to raising weeds awareness has been really great. We all have so much to do in our precious free time nowadays that appeals to our better nature are not enough; the events have to be fun if we are going to get involved.

Weedbusting has also developed as a way of building communities, both of interest and of locality. There is nothing quite like wading your way through kneedeep tradescantia, that you then have the satisfaction of clearing from a bush area, to form bonds of determination to keep the project going!

One of the most stunning examples of where Weedbusters has taken off in a community is Waiheke Island. I am so excited about this project that I have featured it not once but twice in this newsletter, with a front page feature and also a light-hearted back page spot.

It just goes to show how creative you can get when the mood takes you and there is an audience for your talents!

Carolyn Lewis
National Weedbusters Coordinator

Manapouri Weedbusters write...

Around 50 people took part in Te Anau's Arbor Day celebrations, including Scouting Te Anau Cubs, Keas, Scouts and Venturers and their families.

DOC's Christine Officer got the kids busy identifying weeds and tagging them with brightly coloured ribbon. Adults then cut and gelled the stumps, and the kids dragged the cut plants to the weed mountain.

Around 170 native plants, provided by a local nursery, DOC, and a local resident, were put in the ground; another local plant nursery arranged to have the hard soil in the planting area broken up with a small digger to help the spade work.



Iona Brimecombe (nearly 6) knows her hawthorn

At the end of the planting the team enjoyed a big BBQ. Plans are already underway for Arbor Day 2008!

Catherine Brimecombe
Manapouri Weedbusters

Tauranga's Giant Ginger Bash

Bay of Plenty residents were given a chance to 'get mad' at wild ginger at a recent promotion in Tauranga.

This invasive weed was given a thorough hammering, with activities and information based around Tauranga City Mall.

Originally planted in New Zealand as an ornamental garden species, wild ginger - both yellow ginger (*Hedychium flavescens*) and kahili ginger (*H. gardnerianum*) - is now a significant threat to native ecosystems.

Reaching up to three metres tall, and forming dense clumps in native forests, wild ginger smothers young plants and stops the establishment of native seedlings.

Wild ginger is also a serious problem in Northland, Auckland, Nelson, the general Marlborough area, and the West Coast of the South island.

It is also present around Hawkes Bay, where fortunately prompt action has stopped it in its tracks.

The Giant Ginger Bash was held as part of a month long Sustainable Backyards programme run by the Tauranga Environment Centre, with support from Environment Bay of Plenty, the Department of Conservation, the Tauranga City Council, and Weedbusters.

Sara Brill
Environment Bay of Plenty



GINGER BASHERS! Kimberley Katters (on left) and Bridget Martin (on right) show how it's done.

Weedy warblings...

This little musical gem comes to you courtesy of the Waiheke Weedbusting project, and had its debut performance at the Waiheke Market Day in May...



Sung to the tune of "In an English Country Garden"

How many noxious weeds can grow
In a Waiheke Bach Garden
I'll tell you now of some of them I
know
And those I miss you'll surely pardon

Moth plant, aggies, Pampas grass
Asparagus you cannot pass
Palm grass, phoenix palm that sticks
you in the face
And they climb over natives
And strangle them to death
In a Waiheke Bach Garden

Loppers..... don't forget the
Loppers
Loppers..... don't forget the
Loppers

Andy Spence
Auckland Regional Council

Want to win a \$50 Gardening New Zealand gift card?

To go into the monthly draw to win a \$50 Gardening New Zealand gift card, enter the 'Name This Weed' competition at

www.weedbusters.org.nz



Yellow ginger
(*Hedychium flavescens*)



Strawberry dogwood
(*Dendrobenthamia capitata*)



Elephant's ear
(*Alocasia brisbanensis*)



Eleagnus
(*Eleagnus x reflexa*)

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Department of Conservation
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and all regional councils and unitary authorities

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