



Weedbusters!

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Busting weeds has become a weekend habit for some Tauranga residents after the Urban Greenspace Project was launched last year.

Tauranga's weekend weeders

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In this issue:

Tauranga's weekend weeders

Rotarians bust Motutapu moth plant

Beach bums, sand hogs and cliff hangers

Caring for our coast

In the thick of it

Awards uncover wonderful weedbusters

Waikato Weedbusters write...

Sniffing out weeds



Another successful working bee: members of the Castlewold Drive Greenspace Care Group.

The project aims to get communities involved in caring for their local reserves and gullies. Support from the Ministry for the Environment's Sustainable Management Fund, Environment Bay of Plenty and Tauranga City Council has meant that six projects are now underway.

The main weeds tackled so far include privet, pampas and woolly nightshade. Volunteers are helped with free advice, plants, herbicides and tools to borrow - as well as a chance to meet neighbours over a free morning tea!

Rotarians bust Motutapu moth plant

Epsom Rotarians are lending a hand to efforts to rid Motutapu Island of its massive moth plant infestations.

Moth plant (*Araujia sericifera*) is one of the most serious threats to the offshore islands. Moth plant vines can rapidly grow up and over native plants, smothering them.

Each vine produces masses of fist-sized, choko-like green pods that split open when ripe to release large amounts of wind-borne seed.

Working in conjunction with the Motutapu Restoration Society, Epsom Rotarians have been

spending weekends collecting moth plant pods for safe disposal.

Motutapu Restoration Society runs monthly trips to the island for volunteers wanting to help with weedbusting or planting.



Epsom Rotary Club weedbusters on a recent moth plant mission.

Working together
to protect New Zealand

Beach bums, sand hogs and cliff hangers



Boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*)



Tree lupin (*Lupinus arboreus*)

Tourist books will tell you that 90% of New Zealanders live within 30 minutes of the coast. No one would argue that holidays at the beach are still a national past-time.

Whether it is golden or black sand, estuarine or rocky, New Zealand's coastline is a precious part of our national identity - and these areas are under threat from weeds.

Many of these weeds were transplanted from urban gardens to areas around holiday homes. They needed to be hardy and easy care to survive the windy, salty or dry conditions often found in coastal areas. As a result, some of our nastiest and toughest weeds are now 'jumping the fence' to establish in natural areas around these coastal settlements.

Weeds establishing in coastal areas can have a variety of negative impacts.

In estuary and harbour areas, grasses like spartina (*Spartina* sp.) and pampas (*Cortaderia*

selloana, *C. jubata*) can accumulate silt and sand, changing the nesting habitats of some of our most threatened native bird species.

Weeds such as Phoenix palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) and century plant (*Agave americana*) can invade sandy areas, sending up sharp spines or spikes that can cause injury to humans and animals.

Weedy trees such as Italian buckthorn (*Rhamnus alaternus*) can crowd out pohutukawas, and bulbs like agapanthus (*Agapanthus praecox*) can cover large areas, changing the way the coastline looks.

Chilean rhubarb (*Gunnera tinctoria*) coats coastal cliffs in huge leaves, threatening the survival of endangered native herb species.

Those with coastal properties need to think very carefully about what they introduce into these precious areas. It would be a tragedy for weeds to ruin what we all value so much.

Caring for our coast

The Coast Care concept arrived in New Zealand in 1993, with the first groups being formed at Whiritoa, on the east coast of the Coromandel, and Port Waikato on the West Coast of the North Island.

Since then, around 100 Coast Care groups have popped up around the country, all of them focussed on protecting beach and dune areas from erosion by replanting with native species.

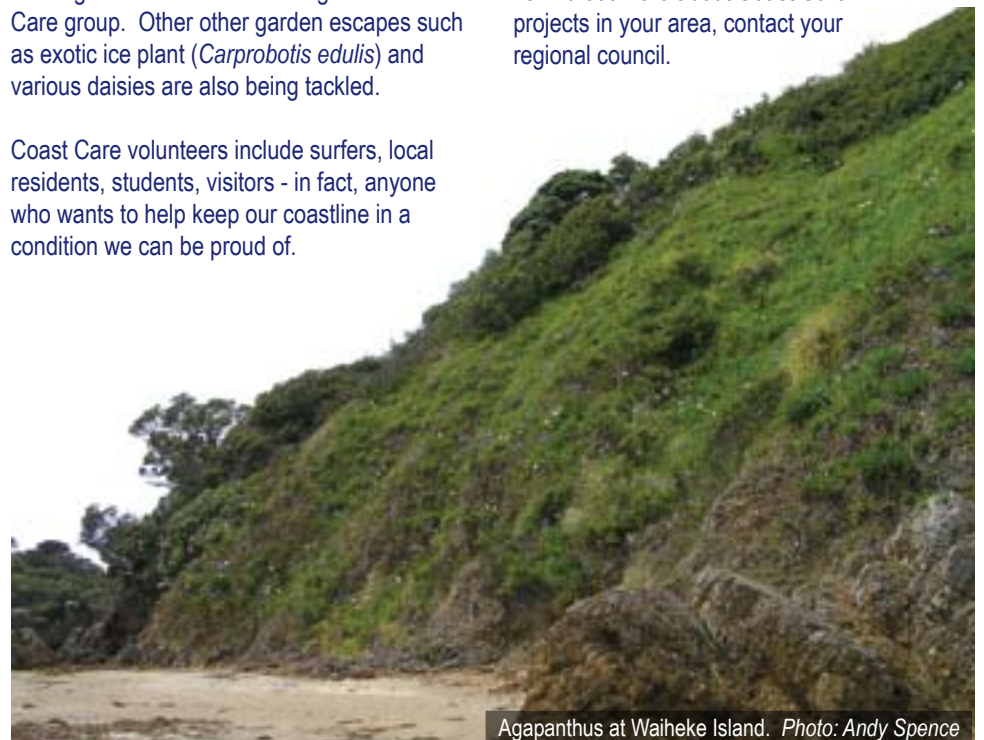
Most Coast Care groups undertake weed control of some sort as part of their dune management work. The large number of weedy plants introduced into coastal gardens means that they are never short of work!

Marram grass (originally planted for erosion control), wattles (*Acacia* sp.), agapanthus (*Agapanthus praecox*), Century plant (*Agave americana*), boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*), yuccas, bushy asparagus (*Asparagus densiflora*), and Phoenix palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) are some of the weeds

causing most of the weedbusting work for Coast Care group. Other other garden escapes such as exotic ice plant (*Carprobotis edulis*) and various daisies are also being tackled.

Coast Care volunteers include surfers, local residents, students, visitors - in fact, anyone who wants to help keep our coastline in a condition we can be proud of.

To find out more about Coast Care projects in your area, contact your regional council.



Agapanthus at Waiheke Island. Photo: Andy Spence

Sniffing out weeds

They've been used to find both live people and dead bodies, drugs and plant material in bags and parcels, landmines and lost kids. They are already used by the Department of Conservation to track down animal pests - so why not weeds?

Researchers at Montana State University have trained an Alsatian cross, called Knapweed Nightmare, to hunt out the invasive knapweed, a plant that has a multi-million dollar impact on state agriculture every year.

Nightmare, as she is known, is trained to find knapweed plants, stop and dig at the plant for a few seconds, and then move off. The GPS locator on her collar notes when she stops and takes a reading, allowing mapping of weed spread in a given area.

It adds a whole new dimension to 'sniffer technology'!



Photo: Montana State University

Want to win a \$50 Gardening New Zealand voucher?

You can go in the monthly draw to win a \$50 Gardening New Zealand voucher.

Simply enter the 'Name This Weed' competition at

www.weedbusters.org.nz



Bartlettina
(*Bartlettina sordida*)



Himalayan honeysuckle
(*Leycesteria formosa*)



Chameleon plant
(*Houttynia cordata*)



Purple loosestrife
(*Lythrum salicaria*)

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and all regional councils and unitary authorities

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