

TRUE COLOURS

JANUARY 2002

PROJECT CRIMSON LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

2001 was a significant year for Project Crimson. The long decline of pohutukawa was halted and the road back to a crimson coastline has begun. So we have refined our vision for Project Crimson: *to enable pohutukawa and rata to flourish once again in their natural habitat, and to enjoy the status of icon in the hearts and minds of all New Zealanders.* We have been purposely bold in our vision. New Zealanders are looking for leadership on critical issues from groups such as ours, and we intend to stand up and be counted. For example "Icon" status is challenging but at the essence of what we believe - it will mean our species will be too important to our cultural identity to lose.

I'd like to acknowledge the thousands of people nationwide who are helping us realise the Project Crimson vision.

Encouragingly, last year there was for the first time an even split between pohutukawa and rata projects, and North and South Island projects.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I hope you had a cracker crimson Christmas and I wish you a Happy New Year.



Chris Liddell

Chairman



FROM REMINISCENCES TO RESTORATION AT CAPE FOULWIND

An old farmer's childhood memories of the Cape Foulwind Peninsula lit with crimson rata blooms has inspired a major restoration project – 2500 northern and southern rata and 5000 native shelter trees planted over the next five years.

Project leader Deane Keir has long been involved in native forest restoration projects in the area, but says the strong images created by the farmer gave him the idea to restore the Cape Foulwind walkway to its former glory.

"The farmer talked about being able to see the crimson blooms from a long way off and how he knew he was nearly home when he saw them. It was a very evocative image that inspired me to start this project."

Project Crimson has provided major support for the project, which was officially launched in mid October. Project Crimson Trustee and South Island Co-ordinator Dr Philip Simpson says: "the project's strength lies in the community support for it, because the Cape Foulwind area has residential, farming, industrial (limestone quarrying) and recreational interests all inter-related. It is also scenically spectacular."



Deane Keir explains that planting these ceremonial rata marks the beginning of the longer restoration project. John Green, DoC's Community Relations Programme Manager from Westport (left), and Howard Williams look on. Howard, an ex Buller County Council Chairman, played a significant role in the land zoning process at Cape Foulwind to set aside recreation reserves.

The area being restored is so significant that the Department of Conservation (DoC) has designated it a 'showcase' area. Only a few such areas have been designated in New Zealand, and these areas highlight one of the range of different activities that DoC undertakes – from ecological restoration of islands and 'mainland islands', through to managing sites of historic significance, or simply catering for recreational

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PROTECTING POHUTUKAWA & RATA

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PROJECT CRIMSON


CarterHoltHarvey
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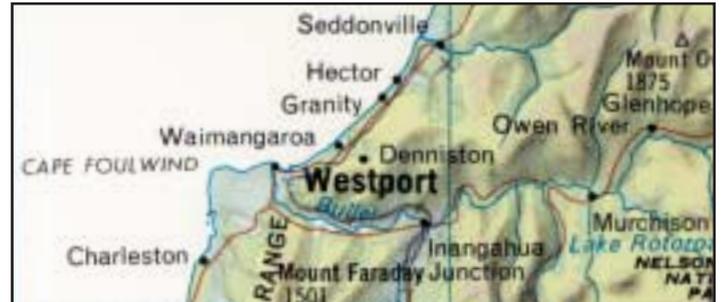
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enjoyment. There is one showcase area in each of DoC's 13 conservancies, and all provide a high standard of facilities for the casual visitor.

Deane says he is excited about seeing the project come to fruition and is pleased at the high level of support and interest shown by local community groups and schools.

"This area is a long way from the few remaining large stands of northern and southern rata in the Buller region, and if we hadn't given nature a helping hand then it would have been hundreds of years before rata again flourished on the peninsula.

"While many of us involved in the project will get to see rata blooms on Cape Foulwind again, we will not get to see a mature forest. The planting we are doing now creates a nice legacy to leave for future generations."



A FROSTY RECEPTION FOR 'FOREIGN' FRIENDS

All pohutukawa were not created equal, especially when it comes to frost tolerance. Differing levels of frost damage sustained by pohutukawa stock grown at Auckland-based UNITEC over the winter demonstrate one reason why trees should be grown from locally sourced seed.

Gill Thurlow, a Technician at UNITEC's School of Landscape and Plant Science, says pohutukawa and rata have evolved to suit localised conditions and trees grown from seed taken from mild microclimates are likely to be hard-hit if their natural habitat is rarely visited by Jack Frost.



From flourishing to frizzly – these plants (left – right) say it all. A two-year-old seedling sourced from Whitianga is virtually unaffected by the frost. The two-year-old Whitford seedling sustained some damage. Interestingly, the year-old Woodhill stock was

hardest-hit even though this seed's source is less than 30 km from UNITEC. Its natural habitat, in a largely frost-free coastal environment sheltered by sand dunes, has made this tree the least frost-resistant.

STOP PRESS - NEWS UPDATES

COOL CRIMSON CAFÉ CARDS: UTAKURA UPDATE:

Last summer's Project Crimson café cards proved such a hit that we have developed new ones this year. To get one for yourself, check out your local café.



A management committee has been established to administer Project Crimson's Utakura block. It has representatives from Project Crimson, the Department of Conservation, iwi and the local community. The committee has begun work on drafting a management plan, which is due for completion this year. For more information about the Utakura block see:

www.projectcrimson.org.nz/News/news20010317.html

JUST WHAT IS THAT NURSERY LABEL TELLING ME? HOW TO AVOID UNPLEASANT SURPRISES IN YOUR GARDEN

“Why hasn’t the pohutukawa I planted years ago flowered yet?” is a question that Jan Velvin often hears. Jan, an experienced plant propagator, provides some user-friendly hints on knowing what to expect from a tree when you read its label.

Plant names follow an international code that groups botanically similar plants in a systematic way. This system allows plants up to three levels of names: genus, species and, where appropriate, cultivar. The genus can be seen as a surname (e.g. *Metrosideros*) and the species is like a Christian name (e.g. *excelsa*). A cultivar name is applied to a plant selection that is deemed to have one or more significant desirable characteristics (see below).

Members of the *Metrosideros* genus are all members of the myrtle family (*Myrtaceae*) and have hard, very heavy, dark red heartwood. Other relatives include the feijoa, guava, cloves, eucalyptus and bottlebrushes. The plant’s individual identification is provided by the species name. For example, *Metrosideros excelsa* differentiates the mainland pohutukawa from its cousins such as *Metrosideros robusta* (northern rata).

Apart from providing information about the plant’s genealogy, the label reveals the way it has been propagated, which provides clues about what to expect from the plant in future.

If only two levels of names (e.g. *Metrosideros excelsa*) are provided, then you know the tree has most likely been grown from seed. Jan says pohutukawa and rata grown from seed



Photo: Bret McKay

Size does not count: a three-year-old ‘Vibrance’ provides a spectacular show at Mimiwhangata Bay, near Whangarei.

AUCKLAND ZOO'S SEA LION SHORES A ROARING SUCCESS:

Pohutukawa and Project Crimson are on show at the new enclosure for sea lions and penguins, which is designed to create a natural coastal effect. Project Crimson sponsored the trees and there is signage about the trust and our work. More than half a million people visit the zoo every year, so our display is a great opportunity to educate them about the value of protecting pohutukawa and rata.

GPS WATCH DONATED:

Our thanks to Casio for donating a GPS watch, which enables us to establish precisely the co-ordinates of our plantings. Those people who make a donation for the planting of a tree will be notified of the co-ordinates of ‘their’ particular tree.





A label for *Metrosideros excelsa* 'Parnell' shows the level of detail provided by good garden labelling.

- the plant's growth habit (e.g. smaller-growing forms, upright forms, etc.)
- flower colour (e.g. oranges, pinks, yellows, or deep reds)
- flower size (e.g. larger than normal)
- flowering season (e.g. early or late flowering).

For example, a tree bearing the label *Metrosideros excelsa* 'Vibrance' is telling you that this is a selected form. The reason for selection in this case is to retain its large glowing bright orange/red flowers. It also has an upright growth habit.

"Next time you visit a garden centre have a close look at the plant labels because they provide important information that will help you to choose a plant that meets your gardening needs – and avoid any unpleasant surprises later on," says Jan.

result in genetic diversity and therefore the precise details of their growth habits, flower colour, flowering frequency, etc., cannot be predicted.

"Many people visiting a garden centre to buy themselves a pohutukawa or rata seedling don't understand that there is no guarantee when the tree will flower. Your tree might flower within a year, it might take 10 years, or at worst it may never flower," says Jan.

The third naming level provided on a label means the tree is a cultivar and therefore should have been vegetatively propagated to retain the desired characteristics of the parent plant. This is normally done by taking cuttings, grafting and micro-propagation (plants grown from tissue culture). Trees propagated from cuttings or grafting often flower in the first year or two, while micro-propagated trees take a little longer.

Labels usually provide a high level of detail about cultivars because they have significant desirable characteristics that differ from the norm. For example:



No labels necessary for this healthy tree - the vigorous blooms say it all.

STOP PRESS - NEWS UPDATES

NEW FUNDING DEADLINE:

Applicants for Project Crimson funding and support now have until 1 March to apply. This enables us to allocate funding in time for optimal winter planting.

For more information about our annual funding grants, see: www.projectcrimson.org.nz/funding.html

TWO SPECIAL SUPPORTERS

While community support is Project Crimson's lifeblood, we are also grateful for the ongoing support of Holden for the use of two Rodeo utes, and ColensoBBDO for a huge amount of advertising and design support.

HOW MUCH IS THAT METROSIDEROS?

While most people would agree on the ecological, environmental and aesthetic value of pohutukawa and rata, trying to calculate their economic value is an inexact science. Several different methodologies are commonly used in New Zealand, often with widely differing results.

Rob Graham, a tutor at the Waikato Polytechnic's Department of Agriculture and Horticulture, says in a sense the pohutukawa is priceless. "The pohutukawa is priceless to New Zealand because it has become a national icon."

Attempts have been made to put a total 'amenity value' on trees in urban areas – one valuer estimated this as NZ\$17.7 billion. It would be impossible to undertake this exercise for a tree such as pohutukawa because of its cultural significance to Maori and non-Maori alike. It is possible, however, to place an economic value on individual trees. Typical scenarios for doing this include:

- putting bonds on developers whose sections have notable trees
- calculating the economic cost of damaging or removing a tree standing in the way of a planned amenity (e.g. public building) or utility (e.g. road) versus the cost of moving the amenity's location
- resolving disputes whereby a neighbour has harmed or killed someone's tree.

Rob says rata are probably even more valuable than pohutukawa. This is because they are more difficult to transplant than pohutukawa, and because their height increases their worth in most tree evaluation systems.

While arborists and local body employees have a range of evaluation procedures to draw on, each one uses different criteria to calculate a tree's value and can therefore produce quite different results. Furthermore, some of the criteria are subjective, which means

valuations can differ between arborists.

"Evaluating trees is an inexact science but that is the case with any type of evaluation, whether it be for a building, jewellery or an antique," says Rob.

Several evaluation systems are used in New Zealand:

STEM (Standard Tree Evaluation Method): Takes into account the tree's condition, age and amenity values (e.g. visibility, form, whether it is solitary or part of a group) and the planting and associated maintenance costs. It is the most appropriate system to evaluate notable trees.

ISA (International Society of Arboriculture): Calculates a tree's value on a range of criteria, most notably the trunk's diameter. This system is best for non-notable trees.

Burnley: The tree's value is calculated from a combination of the tree's canopy volume, a 'unit price' assigned to that species, and a range of criteria such as its location, form and life-expectancy. This Australian system is not commonly used here.

Halliwell: An English system that is no longer extensively used in this country.

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'How much is that Metrosideros?' – continued

We'll spare you the complex mathematical calculations, but evaluations by Diploma in Arboriculture student Paul Kenny showed the degree of variation from using different evaluation systems.



The pohutukawa (far left) is in the BNZ car park at 11th Avenue, Tauranga. It is of good form and health.

STEM: \$32,141

ISA: \$43,700

Burnley: \$24,317

A pohutukawa (left) growing in a raised bed in the centre of 1st Avenue, Tauranga. This tree is growing hard up against a phoenix palm.

STEM: \$15,420

ISA: \$18,900

Burnley: \$8006

Rob says the subjective nature of evaluation means that people should be careful whom they choose to value a tree. "It would be easy for a valuer to use a system whose result will fit a particular agenda, so it is important to use a qualified arborist who has an arboriculture diploma or degree". At present Waikato Polytechnic is the only New Zealand tertiary institute offering a diploma of arboriculture.

MORE THAN EVER ON OUR WONDERFUL WEB SITE:

www.projectcrimson.org.nz

Every month more people visit our web site than the previous month. So to ensure the site remains fresh and interesting, we have added some new content in recent months. This includes:

- information about pohutukawa and rata's significance to Maori
- everything you ever wanted to know about growing and maintaining pohutukawa and rata
- resource material for teachers
- pohutukawa and rata facts and figures (ideal for children's homework projects)
- electronic post cards.

The latest feature is a search engine that makes it easier to find that weird or wonderful *Metrosideros* fact within our web site.

Let us know if there is anything else you would like to see on the web site by sending an email to: **info@projectcrimson.org.nz**

