



# Pukeiti NEWSLETTER

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.

*Rhododendrons in a Rainforest*

PLANT  
LIST AND  
ORDER FORM  
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VOLUNTEERING  
IN THE GARDEN &  
OTHER MEMBER  
ACTIVITIES  
inside

[www.pukeiti.org.nz](http://www.pukeiti.org.nz)

## Pukeiti's Golden Summer



The Lodge border

**The gardens are well worth a visit despite it not being the season for rhododendrons to flower. The gardens and track walks are still most pleasurable.**

Highlights at this time are the Keiller Garden, which in summer is at its colourful peak, and the replanted Lodge borders which are eye-catching. Both feature an array of perennials including *Rudbeckia*, *Aster*, *Achillea*, *Sedum*, *Dahlia*, *Ageratum*, *Phlomis*, *Coreopsis* and *Helium* to name a few. The tracks through the garden are lit by patches of hydrangeas.

While in the Vireya Walk, at this time of the year, it is the foliage, a tapestry of shapes and colours, which is the attraction. Only a few vireyas are in bloom, one of which is the white, large-flowered *R. konori*, its scent filling the surrounding space. Others such as 'Salmon Star' add colour along with a patch of red flowered *Scadoxus* (*Haemanthus*) *katherinae*. At the entrance to the walk a patch of *Lobelia aberdarica* is the focus for many of the

visitors who have come in a steady stream over the summer. The number has been enhanced by several bus loads from four cruise ships which have called into Port Taranaki. There is, too, an increasing number of family groups, some encouraged by the children's Explorers' Programme, arranged around the network of huts throughout the garden, with, of course, the chance of an overnight stay in the Pikopiko Rainforest Hut requiring an hour-long hike to reach. So popular is this bush hut that it is booked out until 2026.

Now school is back class groups are among the visitors. Recently two bus loads from Sacred Heart School, Stratford, spent three days participating in an environmental course run by the TRC.

It has been a dry summer, and the fine days have certainly encouraged visitors. Rain has fallen on only a few days and just 24 mm has been recorded for January, well below the usual. In the

same month 70mm were recorded in Gisborne, reversing the normal 3:1 ratio. Ironical, as Douglas Cook had found it was too dry to grow rhododendrons at Eastwood Hill and convinced the New Zealand Rhododendron Association to establish a show garden in the Pukeiti rainforest. He bought the original tract of land and donated it to the Trust.

For 74 years the rainforest has been protected and conserved and within it the garden has been developed and nurtured. After a recent visit, Gordon Collier, our Patron, who was among the first of the volunteers to be enlisted (and sometimes dragooned!) by Russell Matthews, stated that, "Pukeiti is now as beautiful as I originally dreamed it might be."

The staff, under the guidance of Stuart Robertson, is key to this. Each one of the staff has a particular section for which they are responsible, and all come together when required and also help at Tupare and Holland Gardens. Kristian Davies, the head gardener, outlined



*R. konori* framed with *Podophyllum* 'Kaleidoscope'



*R. 'Salmon Star'*



some of the work done over the summer by his busy team:

- Cutting back bush margins and keeping open view shafts (particularly in the large-leaf area)
- Continuing with the usual summer jobs, weeding, dead heading rhododendrons and perennials, pruning spring flowering shrubs such as *Deutzia* and *Philadelphus*
- Leading guided walks and providing a mobility service
- Completing the Founders' Shelter and the new Hybrid Block
- Lookout with the laying of a concrete aggregate floor
- Staining and oiling the Lodge deck
- Repairing the brick walls behind the Lodge
- Appropriately nurturing and conserving the collections

The Trust continues to play its role by supporting the conservation of the rhododendron collection and financially backing the *ex-situ* project, and through the Plant Forum which meets every two

months with various members of the staff including Andrew Brooker TRC Collection and Project Officer, providing helpful recommendations and relaying the history of some of the acquisitions, which are then recorded on the plant data base. Trust Members of the Plant Forum include Graham Smith, Alan Jellyman, Peter Catt, Glyn Church and Lynn Bublitz.



*Scadoxus (Haemanthus) katherinae* - Vireya Walk

Gardens are not static. Stuart Robertson has recommended a strategic management plan be developed and has invited Pukeiti Trust members to be a part of a meeting to initiate this.

There is a busy year ahead.

Thanks for your continuing membership.

Lynn Bublitz



*Gladiolus murielae* - from the Lodge borders

## An Axeman's Legacy

A 1950s' newspaper clipping included a story on the felling of a 26-year-old redwood at Tupare. A group of men were tasked with the job under the watchful eye of Russell Matthews. According to the story they were all original Pukeiti volunteers and included Allan Jordan, Fred Parker, Arthur Richardson, Pukeiti curator Rob Bailey, and axemen Archie and Ned Shewry. The redwood, the timber of which is considered one of the best, was felled with handsaws, not by axes, and later milled. Russell of course knew the reputation of the Shewry brothers, both champion axemen. Archie had won the 18-inch championship chop at the 1919 Auckland Exhibition, and Ned the world championship in both 1915 and 1921. Ned was also awarded a military medal for his World War 1 service.

The big man spent most of his life

felling native bush, becoming an ardent conversationist in his later years and developing a love for and deep interest in Pukeiti. Despite his knowledge of trees, he was particularly keen on the smaller plants, like primula and polyanthus, and was given a small area in which to plant and nurture these. Years later, on this site, the first vireya glasshouse, funded by Stanley Smith, was built. This was later replaced by the Covered Walk, now superseded by the present extensive Vireya House.

When Ned died, he left to the Trust a parcel of land at Bell Block, which was later sold, with the considerable proceeds being added to the Trust Fund. A grant from the Trust was later used to finance the Covered Walk, with Ned's original garden being remembered by a small plaque.

Tupare's redwoods trees have a place at Pukeiti too, as timber milled recently has been used as panelling in the ceiling of the Douglas Cook Room.





# Pukeiti Members' Activities March 2025

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2024.

## The Members of the Sub-committee

Lynn Bublitz - Acting Chair

Sandie Gray - Secretary

Members: Ann Bolton, Rene Duncan , Karyn Fitzgerald, Diane Jordan, David Lawrence, Heather Robson, Caroline Sparks, Paul Sparks and Gary Walls-Renwick.

The Sub-Committee is focused to ensure the planned activities are notable experiences and enjoyed by members.

## Activities

Members gathered on February 16 for late afternoon guided walks, the less mobile taking the buggy, and then met on the terrace of the Douglas Cook Room for drinks and nibbles . All were impressed at how the gardens were looking and were most taken with the Keiller Garden, which was striking, and the range of plants in the Lodge border . It was an enjoyable afternoon.



Ageratum in front of The Douglas Cook Room



View from the new Hybrid Block Lookout

## Coming Events

### PLANTS FOR MEMBERS SCHEME

This has been organised , as in the past, by Heather Robson. We are indebted to her for the work she has done for this important members' privilege. Plants offered for sale are donated by members, including Sue Davies who has supplied rare rhododendron species. And we are grateful for the work of Andrew Brooker who keeps an eye out for plants for the scheme.

This year's plant list is included with this Newsletter.

**Plant orders close 5pm Friday 28 March.**

**Plant collection Friday 04 April.**

### AN AUTUMN EXCURSION SUNDAY 06 APRIL

For the first time garden visits in Autumn have been planned . We will visit three gardens in rural Stratford. Bring a picnic lunch, and your usual beverage.

**9.45am** Meet at the Tupare carpark. car pooling will be arranged if required

**10am** Drive to Stratford stopping at Lake Mangamahoe and the Midhurst Cemetery to observe wild species rhododendrons

**11am** Arrive at Sheila and Mark Masters' Garden, 703 Beaconsfield Rd. Leave at 11.45am and drive to Sparks' Garden

**12 noon** Arrive at Paul and Carolyn's Garden, 847 East Rd Toko. This is a new developing garden the interest unfolding

They have invited the group to have their picnic lunch here. Paul and Carolyn are newcomers to the Members' Sub-Committee.

After lunch we will leave for Cairnhill.

**1.30pm** Arrive at Cairnhill , 1054 East Rd, Toko the garden of June and Colin Lees . This garden is in the Garden Festival, it will be interesting to see it in the Autumn.

**2.30pm** Drive home

Members might then like to have coffee at the Stumble Inn in Merrilands.

### AUTUMN MEMBERS' DAY SATURDAY 12 APRIL

**10am** Tea and coffee available at the Lodge

Buggy transport will be available from the gate at 10.15am

**10.30am** Formal welcome

Guided walks to the Keiller Garden and the Rowe Walk

**11.30am** Gather at the Hybrid Block for the opening of the Hybrid Block Lookout. The Pukeiti Trust has financed this with the help of two bequests

**12. 30pm** Potluck Lunch . This has been a tradition since the opening of Pukeiti, highlighting the social occasion of the day

**1.30pm** Stuart Robertson will up-date progress of the three TRC gardens: Tupare, Hollard Gardens and of course Pukeiti

**Plant sales** Plants will be available for sale including two rare vireyas.

# Members' Activities

# 2025

## March

FRI 28  
Plant Sale orders close

## April

FRI 4  
Plant pick up day

SUN 6  
An Autumn Excursion

FRI 11  
**PRT Committee (Board) Meeting**

SAT 12  
Autumn Members' Day

TUE 29  
**Members' Sub-committee Meeting**

WED 30  
Garden Progress Review - walk  
with Kristian Davies

## May

SUN 18  
WALK | Ferns, the treasures of  
Pukeiti, a walk led by Lynn Bublitz

## June

WED 25  
RSVPs close for Mid-Winter's Lunch

FRI 27  
**PRT Committee (Board) Meeting**

SAT 28  
Mid-Winter Lunch

## July

THU 03  
Annual Subscriptions sent out

SUN 20  
WALK | Investigating  
notable Forest Trees

WED 23  
Propagation Day - prepare plants for  
Members' Sale (date to be confirmed)

## August

TUE 05  
**Members' Sub-committee Meeting**

SAT 23  
WALK | A guided walk around the  
large-leaved Rhododendrons followed  
by tea and coffee in the Lodge

## September

SUN 21  
Visit to Heritage Park and Cross Hills

TUE 30  
**Members' Sub-committee Meeting**

## October

FRI 17  
**PRT Committee (Board) Meeting**

SAT 18  
**Spring Members'  
Day & AGM**

TUE 28  
NZRA Rhodenza Conference  
Cambridge

FRI 31  
Taranaki Rhododendron Festival,  
31st Oct – 9th Nov. Volunteers  
needed for hosting duties in  
the Lodge over the festival

## November

TUE 18  
**Members' Sub-committee Meeting**

WED 26  
Journal Posting

## December

THU 11  
RSVPs close for Christmas BBQ

SAT 13  
Christmas BBQ

## Pukeiti Library

The catalogue of books can be  
accessed at the following site  
[www.librarycat.org/lib/Pukeiti](http://www.librarycat.org/lib/Pukeiti)



## Working Bees

On Wednesday mornings, a group of members get  
together to help the garden staff. If you'd like to join in—  
once, occasionally or every week—we meet at 9.00am or  
after morning tea at 10.15am, outside the staff quarters.



## Pukeiti

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[www.pukeiti.org.nz](http://www.pukeiti.org.nz)  
is worth a look!

Contact TRC for Lodge and Pikopiko Bookings

TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL

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