

PRESTON PARK

Manager's Newsletter | Autumn 2024

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Dear Parents, Staff and Students,

Autumn came earlier than expected, after a lovely but wet summer. The days have now lengthened, and the dawns are darker and cooler. But the autumn days remain warm and mostly still. The autumn period has been used to prune, fertilise, clean around all new plantings and general make the Park look a million dollars! To keep the park looking so good selective spraying is still essential. The friendly Bay Tree Tech team sprayed the 'wandering dew' in the middle of the native forest zone and hopefully that will stop its growth and allow the new groundcover to take over.

Our planned autumn planting started after Easter which included ground covering creepers and smaller trees under 2m. Most of the plants were home grown, under the guidance of the 'Trees for Survival' co-ordinator, Ailie. Planting was a combined event involving BC staff and students and my part time staff. Over the past month we have planted out the 500+ plus trees and small plants.

I am working on a new Strategic Plan 2024 - 28. I tried to resign my manager's role at the end of 2023 after 5 years. BUT to no avail. Hence a new plan is required. The focus for the next four to five years will be to improve water quality and life in the lake while maintaining the developing parkland. Again, most of the plants are native and a greater portion are now being grown from seed

gathered from plants already in the Park. The Kauri, Puriri and Totara natives specifically prosper in the park.

Most plants within Preston Park have grown well over the summer, including the weeds unfortunately, and they are always a challenge to keep under control.. Sadly, I lost two part time staff members in November and with the end-of-the-year holidays it was Stephen and I trying to hold back an avalanche of growth. Thankfully James returned from a month in his home country, Uganda ready to get stuck in and help. Rotarians offered assistance and BC's new initiatives for 'service days' were introduced which meant that over 100 people gave up to five hours to clear weeds from new plantings, ensuring their survival. The wetland plants are really looking great, and I cannot wait to see the maturing of many of the slower growing trees in five years' time.

The wetter weather revealed 'hidden' springs which need to be drained. That work takes a digger, pipes and gravel which all cost but two new drains will belaid before winter. My application for external funding was unsuccessful this year so 50% of my budget is no longer available. I am grateful for the ongoing support from the CET which means that there is sufficient finance available for the work to be done as budgeted..

You may not have noticed that on the north-west boundary I have started an orchard - so far planting

includes Fig, Olives, Plum, Peach, Feijoas, 4 citruses, and an avocado tree. All are prospering and the orange tree has produced 3 large oranges.

In each newsletter I seek to include something about the park that adds value. This time: "What attracts birds to the Park?"

If you love having birds around your home and in the garden, there are some things you can do to attract them and provide them with some much-needed bird food.

- We should do everything we can do to help our native birds survive.
- Firstly, you must manage predators: Stoats, rats, weasels, possums, cats and hedgehogs prey on birds, including their eggs and nestlings. If you want to keep the birds flourishing, controlling pests is important. Keep the cat inside at night and set traps or use bait stations to rid your garden of rats and mice.
- Watch what you feed birds. Some foods are not good for our native birds. Avoid: feeding mouldy food, Honey water, bread, corn, peanuts, sunflower seeds, walnuts, junk food, and too much of anything
- Many birds eat insects so encouraging a healthy mix of spiders, moths, beetles, and earthworms etc. A good layer of mulch or leaf litter on the garden will encourage insects, and birds are a natural way of keeping them under control. Fantail, Morepork and Kingfisher eat insects as well as mice.
- Add a birdbath to your garden. Not accessible to cats, but still easy enough to get to for cleaning and refilling. Give it a rinse and a scrub every 2 days to keep the water fresh and the birds happy!

- Obviously, plants like flaxes, kōwhai etc provide good food for New Zealand birds
- Suggested trees and plants include: Titoki; Cabbage Trees; Rewarewa; Mahou; Tarata; Kowhai; Puriri; Wineberry; Coprosma; Kuroko; Manuka; Kanuka; Kawakawa; Astelia; Kaka beak; Hebbes; Fuchsias



'All things bright and beautiful, the Lord God made them all!'