



Spring Nursery News – September 2017

Hello Nursery Supporters

The nursery here in Company Bay has been hunkered down for winter, waiting for the sun to return from behind the hill, and the rain to stop. In the depths of winter, the sun only comes up for about an hour and a half before sinking out of sight, like in Antarctica (Adele Penguins would love it here). But after counting down to the shortest day, gradually the days get longer and now, suddenly, it is spring.

What is surprising is the seedlings and plants in the rabbit-proofing have even grown over winter. They will be able to be moved out soon to make way for new ones, and hopefully the bunnies won't notice.



Seedlings growing strong



A cold winter's day at the nursery

Seeds sown in autumn, are starting to germinate, especially in the tunnel-shade house, I think because it gets more sunshine, and is slightly warmer. You can't walk in there for seed trays and seedlings! The lawns are in need of a mow, if only it would stop raining long enough for the soil to dry out. The Grillo ride-on mower was leaving tyre grooves in the grass!



Our vollies hard at work

The volunteers, Prue, Heather, Glynis and Rachel have been hard at work, getting outside in the sun when it finally stops raining, and have weeded, and potted, and pricked out, and generally put the world to right while working. Their hard work, and humour are invaluable to the Nursery. All the cake and coffee in the world wouldn't make up for the work they do (although it certainly helps them along!)

Trust Ranger Ben and various community groups have planted about 400 plants so far this season, so we are re-arranging stand out boxes with new plants to fill the gaps. This week Otago Polytech Horticulture students are going to Tavora with him, and the pingao will be planted out on the beach, along with hundreds of flax on a slip site.



The team from Jade Software at Okia

I heard a Radio NZ article a few months back about a conservation trust up in Hawkes Bay who discovered 3 rare Kaka beak plants (*Clianthus maximus*) on its 2000ha

land, and are collecting seed to increase the numbers of this critically endangered plant. I emailed them and have been sent seed to grow them here in Dunedin as a sort of insurance policy. Having researched Kaka Beak, they seem a very hardy, non-specific species that grow well down in Invercargill. So they are going to LOVE Dunedin! Three trays were sown, and yesterday, there they were. They have germinated!



C. maximus has glossy leaves compared to *C. punecus*. The latter, still a rare plant, can often be bought in garden centres. No pressure to keep them alive and healthy, away from slugs, snails, hares and rabbits, AND get them back to Hawkes Bay!

Kaka Beak (Clianthus Maximus) germinated

We have had an Otago Polytechnic Horticulture student come to help for 2 weeks as a practical placement for his course. Siew Mar is originally from Singapore, and has an interest in medicinal native plants. He was an electrical engineer in Singapore, and his love for horticulture brought him to NZ. He said he wished he had done horticulture sooner in his life. He has read widely about NZ plants and was a wonderful help to the nursery, and to Ben, whom he helped release seedlings at Otekiho.

Otago Peninsula Biodiverstiy Group vollies come and go to collect their various traps and gear from the container on the property, and Tudor the Bee Man comes to check his bees and stop for a chat. The hives are thriving, and when the sun is on the hives, you can stand near them and smell the beeswax, while the bees come and go.

It is going to be a busy season with the run up to Christmas. But summer is the time that plants and humans love. Let's hope it is better than last year!

Kind regards

Louise & team