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Kahikatea forest to be planted at Kate Pond in Tiromoana Bush

Kahikatea trees have been planted upstream of the Kate Pond wetland in Tiromoana Bush as the first stage towards establishing a kahikatea forest. It's part of the ambitious restoration project being undertaken by Transwaste Canterbury Ltd (Transwaste) who owns Tiromoana Bush and the adjacent landfill in Kate Valley.

Transwaste Chair Gill Cox says annual tree planting is a key part of restoring the native forests to their original condition.

'While we've fenced Tiromoana Bush to keep out animal pests such as deer and goats who were damaging the existing native bush, we've also had to help along the regeneration process with annual tree planting', says Gill Cox. 'Since the restoration project began in 2004 we've planted thousands of native trees to kick-start natural regeneration. As many of the plantings are now producing their own seedlings, it looks as though we've been successful.'

Kahikatea were first planted by Kate Pond over ten years ago and are now 4-5 metres tall. The successful planting has led to a focus on creating a kahikatea forest and wetland around Kate Pond says Dr David Norton, a professor from the University of Canterbury's Te Kura Ngahere | School of Forestry who wrote the *Tiromoana Bush Restoration Management Plan* in 2004 and provides ongoing advice to Transwaste on the bush restoration project.

'The aim of the planting is to establish a mixed kahikatea forest-wetland system, restoring a regionally rare habitat for a range of native fauna', says Dr Norton. 'We assume birds including kererū and korimako help disperse planted species more widely through Tiromoana Bush. Therefore it's important to ensure trees provide sufficient food resources to sustain these species. This means planting ngaio, tōtara, karamu and other species for fruit on the valley slopes, while on the valley floor adjacent to Kate Pond we are planting flax/harakeke and mānuka for nectar, and kahikatea, cabbage tree/tī kōuka and other appropriate species for fruit.'

Planting is usually scheduled for late-winter/spring after the worst of the frosts and to take advantage of soil moisture being at a peak. Dr Norton says preparation prior to planting is essential.

'The valley floor was used for grazing, so it's covered with pasture grasses, especially cocksfoot. These grasses have to be sprayed with herbicides prior to planting,' says Dr Norton. 'We plant each tree by hand usually spaced 1.0-1.5 metres apart. Fertiliser tabs are placed in planting holes and water retention crystals used at sites likely to dry out in summer.'

Post-planting maintenance involves herbicide application or hand weeding where required. The basic approach to restoration is that through appropriate site preparation and use of good quality plants, post-planting maintenance should be kept to a minimum.

Over 1,000 more kahikatea trees along with other appropriate species will be planted in late winter/early spring of 2020 on the valley floor by Kate Pond to continue creating the mixed kahikatea forest and wetland. A QE2 Covenant protects Tiromoana Bush for perpetuity.

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