

Seed Collection time - Part 2

Jacqui Bond

DOC Seed Collection Co-ordinator

Spurred on by Myrtle Rust coming to our shores May last year, the Department of Conservation (DOC) co-ordinated the collection of Myrtaceae seed from public conservation land around the country. When Myrtle Rust symptoms were not visible last winter, this gave us some time to take stock of our seed collection efforts: 100 complete Myrtaceae seed collections were stored in the New Zealand Indigenous Flora Seed Bank, representing 21 of our 36 bankable native Myrtaceae species. Now it was time to train DOC staff and other collectors and review seed collection methods before the next round of collection began in January 2018.

For this year, collecting was more streamlined. Species and locations were targeted to ensure collection of a wider range of genetic diversity. Collection numbers were assigned and the complexity of reading someone else's hand writing solved! There was also Myrtle Rust surveillance to be done before seed collection and the monitoring of high risk areas where collections couldn't take place.

We are now taking stock of 2018 seed collections: we have an additional 120 new collections in the bank, with climbing rata species still to come in. In total we now have 29 of the 36 Myrtaceae species safe in the bank, with over half of all planned seed collections completed.

What has prevented us from collecting all our planned seed? Plants being plants, we have species which mast, producing good seed crops only some years, with very little on intervening years; this year there was very little *Metrosideros umbellata* and *Metrosideros colensoi* seed to be found. Some species are naturally uncommon, so finding fruit may be rare and they may be in low numbers. This was the case for carmine rata and ramarama. Some species are hard to physically access, while for others we have little information about where they can be found in a particular district.

Help is needed! All of our native myrtles are endemic, with the exception of the common mānuka. This makes them special and it means that we don't always have a lot of information about them: How to dry down and store swamp maire? Which species mast and under what conditions? What are their associated species which we also need to protect? There are lots of opportunities to increase our knowledge. If



A, Cutting; B, Collecting; C, Vouchering; D, Posting; E, Testing; F, Storing.

people have the expertise to tell apart those small-leaved climbing ratas or know of the distribution of that hidden patch of ramarama, get the knowledge out there! Put a record in “NatureWatch NZ” [now iNaturalistNZ], contact a DOC office, collect your own community seed or offer your expertise to help with a collection.

With 2018 seed collections winding down, we will once again have to wait for nature to take its course, hopefully out-smarting Myrtle Rust for another year and giving us a chance to collect seed in 2019.

Okareka mistletoe restoration project

Weed control/plant releasing work day for 2018

Come and join Rotorua Botanical Society to control weeds threatening mistletoe sites and plant new host trees.

Activities will involve hand-pulling, cutting, sawing of vines, climbers and small trees.

**When: Sat 13 October – Weed control/plant releasing
work day**

Meet: Cnr Summit and Loop Roads (lake end) @ 8:45 am

**Grade: medium-hard – activities suitable for all ages
and abilities will be provided**

Please contact the organiser Paul Cashmore

027 650 7264 (mob) or 07 349 7432 (work) to RSVP.

Equipment to bring will be advised.