

Okareka Mistletoe Restoration Project Update

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In 2019 RBS have continued with an ongoing low level of work on this project. This has been the case for many years now with one or two workdays a year attended by a handful of members supported by locals. In April this year I undertook some further knapsack spraying both in the Tikitapu Scenic Reserve and in the Okareka Marginal Strip. This has been followed up further on our 'official' workday on 12 October. Although only three people attended this workday with two on knapsacks and one hand-pulling, we were able to cover most of the key sites in the marginal strip and the Scenic Reserve. We targeted all the usual suite of weeds – namely wandering willie, jasmine, Japanese honeysuckle, Chinese privet, cherries and cotoneaster amongst others.

As a result of our past weed control work most of these key weed species are now at low density in both reserves. However, if we weren't doing this control work once or twice a year these species would rapidly increase in both number and density seriously impacting on both the mistletoe species and the indigenous vegetation in the reserve. Unfortunately, as both these reserves are semi-urban they are prone to constant re-invasion from exotic weed species, with probably the worst being ivy, with seedlings constantly reappearing, particularly under our older plantings in the marginal strip. Although the turnouts have generally been disappointing in recent years the good news is that with the low level of weed invasion we now have it doesn't take too many pairs of hands to keep it maintained that way!!

The other good news is that RBS is not working alone in the reserve. Landcare Okareka with help from Forest and Bird and RBS have continued with the revegetation programme in Tikitapu Scenic Reserve. This has mainly involved clearing discrete areas of bracken-blackberry vineland each season and preparing the site for planting each spring. This year the group planted several hundred native plants into a small clearing between the Mistletoe Track and Benn Rd on 24 August with a good attendance of mainly locals. Although more labour intensive this 'speeds up' the natural revegetation process. In addition, clearing the dense bracken-blackberry areas makes weed control much easier as there are frequently infestations of jasmine growing under and amongst the bracken and blackberry, making it very hard to control otherwise.

Ultimately our past revegetation work in the marginal strip is now starting to reap benefits. A large number of *Tupeia antarctica* mistletoe plants are now appearing on planted five-finger and becoming very dense on maturing tree Lucerne, thereby enhancing the existing mistletoe population in the reserve – one of the key objectives for our project from Day One.