

## EARTHQUAKE REFUGEES IN THE SHADEHOUSE

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A plant of *Myosotis lytteltonensis* was brought to my shadehouse after the earthquakes in 2011. Its owner had been rezoned and was unable to care for it. Initially I divided the plant into four and each flourished under light shade and regular watering. The flowers opened progressively up the stems over the warmer months, and often the tip of the long flowering stem became vegetative and flopped with the weight of new leaves. The existing centre part of the plant gradually got weaker and eventually collapsed. However, by this stage the vegetative tips had layered into surrounding pots and a ring of young plants established. Sometimes I would snip the old flower stalk connecting the layers and pot these young plants. I also left some undisturbed to grow as they wished among some *Leptinella rotundata* and *Gunnera prorepens*. A game of leapfrog has been going on ever since. The myosotis is vigorous enough to dominate the gunnera and leptinella (Fig. 1) but when old parts of the myosotis die back, the gunnera and leptinella are ready to occupy the empty space. The three species complement each other. It is a happy coincidence.

In spite of numerous flowers, over the past few years I have never seen a seedling establish. The floral parts shrivel and drop off after flowering. If the plants were established back in their natural habitat would they produce viable seed or continue to reproduce as they have done in the shadehouse for years?



**Figure 1** Mass flowering of *Myosotis lytteltonensis* above an accompaniment of *Leptinella rotundata*.