

## Eastern promises

Part five in our series of regional plant guide focuses on the eastern North Island, a large area encompassing the Hawkes Bay and Gisborne.

Words and photographs by Philip Smith

Last year, some innovative contractors gave plant conservation an invaluable piece of nationwide PR. Members of the Forest Liferforce Restoration (FLR) Trust have devised an eye-catching plan to blast seeds of the critically-endangered kakabeak (*Clianthus maximus*) into Hawke's Bay cliffs, with the use of a helicopter and a shotgun (that's right, a shotgun!). I think we can all agree this sounds like a much more fun approach to revegetation than earnestly schlepping a spade around denuded hillsides.

*Clianthus maximus* requires all the help it can get, as little over 100 plants survive in the wild following a dramatic crash in the wild population over the last two decades. One of the participants in the FLR Trust's efforts to regenerate *C. maximus* in the wild, Plant Hawke's Bay (a Napier nursery), has also played an integral role in rescuing another critically endangered Hawke's Bay resident – the endemic Te Mata Pimelea. Less than 20 original plants of *Pimelea mimosa* endure upon the south-facing cliffs of

Te Mata Peak. However, a local trust has planted a large quantity of this dwarf shrub on the Peak, to assist in securing its future. *P. mimosa* is a particularly fine plant for Hawke's Bay gardens and public plantings, due to its compact form, silver leaves and abundantly-produced white flowers.

Rising like an island from the surrounding landscape, Te Mata Peak also possesses its own species of snow tussock (*Chionochloa flavicans* f. *temata*), growing amongst interesting limestone communities that include a beautiful umbellifer, *Scandia rosifolia*, mountain flax (*Phormium cookianum*) and a distinctive yellow-flowered herb called *Senecio banksii* (that bears a striking resemblance to the common garden plant, Lamb's Ears).

Further to the north, the East Coast contains a number of rare and interesting species, several of which bear considerable potential for landscape work. In the case of the critically endangered *Libertia cranwelliae*, its potential has already been realised to a large extent, for it has become popular amongst



northern landscape architects as a groundcover species. My experience of this East Coast endemic, which was rediscovered in the wild in 2006 by Graeme Atkins (a DoC field botanist who has performed wonders with preserving the region's rare plants), is that it benefits from some afternoon shade, to maintain optimum condition of the foliage.

In addition to being the only place where *L. cranwelliae* endures, the area around East Cape is home to a critically endangered groundcover, called *Mazus novaezeelandiae* ssp. *impolitus* f. *hirtus*, which has been recently introduced to cultivation. Once the impasse of that improbably long name is overcome, this is a worthwhile mat-forming plant with pretty pale lilac/white flowers, for the lowermost tiers of plantings.

For the last 10 years, a critically endangered, white-flowered forget-me-not (*Myosotis petiolata* var. *pottsiana*) has been cheerfully self-seeding its way around the garden of one of our clients. This eastern Bay of Plenty endemic has a soft appearance that would not be out of step in English or American woodland gardens. The same can be said of another plant of the eastern North Island, *Jovellana sinclairii*, which produces long stems of hanging, white, bell-shaped flowers.

A fast-growing, drought-tolerant form of karo, called *Pittosporum ralphii*, is an interesting example of regional variation. This handsome, large-leaved species takes up the place of *Pittosporum crassifolium* from Gisborne southwards, and is a fine revegetation species for many parts of the East Coast and Hawke's Bay. Finally, and certainly not least, this flank of the North Island contains several populations of the enigmatic *Pittosporum obcordatum* – a threatened small-leaved tree that should be used much more within landscape work, for the striking, shadowy columns that it forms and the allure of its night-scented flowers. ❶



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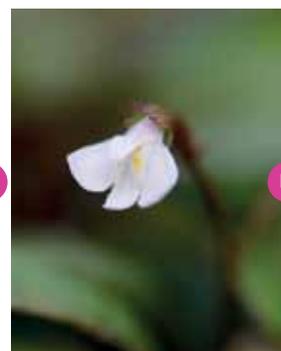
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01: *Clianthus maximus*. 02: *Pimelea mimosa*. 03: Te Mata cliff community. 04: *Planchonella costata*. 05: *Myosotis petiolata* var. *pottsiana*. 06: *Mazus novaezeelandiae* ssp. *impolitus* f. *hirtus*.

## EASTERN NORTH ISLAND

NAME	Height (m)	WIDTH (m)	GROWTH FORM	NOTES
<i>Carmichaelia williamsii</i>	2	2	Arching shrub	Usually short-lived; grows near East Cape; attractive flowers & habit
<i>Chionochloa flavicans</i> f. <i>temata</i>	1.2	1.5	Tussock	Confined to Te Mata Peak; looser flowerheads than typical <i>C. flavicans</i>
<i>Clematis foetida</i>	4	2	Climber	Abundantly produces yellow, scented, star-shaped flowers
<i>Clianthus maximus</i>	3	3	Shrub	Approximately 150 kaka-beak left in wild; cultivation integral to survival
<i>Coriaria pottsiana</i>	0.35	0.8	Creeping shrub	Purplish-bronze foliage; compact species of tutu from East Coast
<i>Elaeocarpus dentatus</i>	10	8	Tree	Beautiful white flowers; an underutilised tree that is attractive to kaka
<i>Gahnia pauciflora</i>	0.5	0.9	Tussock-like	Distinctive compact tussock with unusual shade of green; best on banks
<i>Hebe stenophylla</i> var. <i>stenophylla</i>	1	1.4	Rounded shrub	Compact balls of willow-like leaves; a feature of Te Mata Peak vegetation
<i>Hebe stricta</i> var. <i>macroura</i>	0.8	1.6	Low shrub	Very worthwhile, low, spreading hebe with large white flowerheads
<i>Hebe tairawhiti</i>	2	1.6	Shrub	East Coast endemic; vibrant leaf colour and dense growth habit
<i>Hoheria sexstylosa</i>	8	5	Tree	Conspicuous white flowers and a rapid growth rate, on a narrow tree
<i>Ixerba brexioides</i>	6	4	Tree	Extremely beautiful white flowers; very tricky to grow; for damp areas
<i>Jovellana sinclairii</i>	0.5	0.8	Herb	Elegant white-flowered herb that occurs in moist habitats in this region
<i>Libertia cranwelliae</i>	0.4	0.8	Sword-leaved	Critically-endangered native 'iris' from East Cape; popular in cultivation
<i>Lobelia carens</i>	0.03	0.5	Groundcover	Recently-described 'pratia' from isolated sites in North Island
<i>Lophomyrtus obcordata</i>	4	3	Small tree	Very attractive bark; more prevalent in drier, eastern parts of NZ
<i>Mazus novaezeelandiae</i> ssp. <i>impolitus</i> f. <i>hirtus</i>	0.02	0.5	Groundcover	White flowers; critically endangered species that grows near East Cape
<i>Myosotis petiolata</i> var. <i>pottsiana</i>	0.25	0.3	Herb	Beautiful forget-me-not from the Raukumara Ranges; self-seeds readily
<i>Myosotis saxosa</i>	0.06	0.4	Herb	Attractive mat-forming forget-me-not; has become rare in cultivation
<i>Olearia cheesemani</i>	1.6	1.4	Shrub	Spectacular flowering display; covers itself in white flowers
<i>Olearia furfuracea</i>	2.4	1.8	Shrub	Grows on steep, exposed habitats; produces copious white flowers
<i>Olearia pachyphylla</i>	1.6	1.6	Shrub	Critically-endangered species; remains on eastern Bay of Plenty coast
<i>Parsonsia capsularis</i> var. <i>ochracea</i>	3	2	Climber	Consistently narrow-leaved form of native 'jasmine'; found on Te Mata
<i>Phormium tenax</i> (weaving cultivars)	3	3	Flax	Many traditional cultivars have strong associations with East Coast
<i>Peperomia tetraphylla</i>	0.2	0.3	Succulent herb	Useful and interesting little succulent; potential for green walls
<i>Pimelea mimosa</i>	0.25	0.6	Dwarf shrub	Te Mata Pimelea; beautiful silver foliage, white flowers and pink fruits
<i>Pittosporum obcordatum</i>	4	1.5	Columnar tree	Endangered tree; many of the extant populations occur in these regions
<i>Pittosporum ralphii</i>	6	4	Tree	Large-leaved species of karo; native to the east; excellent revegetation
<i>Planchonella costata</i>	8	6	Tree	Tawapou reaches its southern limit at East Cape; popular with kereru
<i>Scandia rosifolia</i>	0.6	1.4	Sub-shrub	Distinctive form of this white-flowered umbellifer occurs on limestone
<i>Senecio banksii</i>	0.4	1	Creeping herb	Handsome silver-leaved form of this herb grows on Te Mata Peak