

DONKEY SERENADE

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Editor - Lou Bartlett



Junction Awards 2026

We were delighted to attend this year's Junction Awards on Wednesday June 24th, held at 8 Wired Brewery in Matakana. Peter Caccia-Birch, Jim Hight, and Mark Church proudly represented Donkeys at Highfield Garden Reserve, where we were nominated once again for two categories: Non-Profit and Activities (South Division).

It was a fantastic evening celebrating the achievements of businesses and organisations from across the region. We were honoured to be named Runners-Up in the

Non-Profit category (South) finishing behind the well-deserved winners, Sheepworld. We were also thrilled to be recognised as Finalists in the Activities category (South).

Receiving this recognition is a wonderful acknowledgement of the dedication of our volunteers and supporters, whose passion and hard work make everything we do possible. Congratulations to all the finalists and winners, and thank you to the Junction Awards for an enjoyable evening celebrating local success.

AGM

Highfield Garden Reserve & Donkey Society Inc. AGM

Wed 29th July at 4pm

Mahurangi East Bowling Club

"My Visit to Highfield Donkey Park" open to all young photographers

Highfield Garden Reserve, in collaboration with Mahurangi East Library, are delighted to invite young photographers to take part in the "My Visit to Highfield Donkey Park" Photography Competition.

Open to children and young people aged 0–17 years, this exciting competition encourages participants to capture the magic of their visit to Highfield Donkey Reserve during the July School Holidays through the lens of a camera and tell the story of their experience.

How to Enter

- Visit Highfield Donkey Reserve and capture your favourite moments.
- Select four photographs that best tell the story of your visit.
- Write a short story to accompany your photos.
- Complete a registration form to enter.
- Submit your photos and story to Mahurangi East Library.

All entries will be proudly displayed at the library, giving the community an opportunity to enjoy the creativity and unique perspectives of our young visitors.

Prizes and Judging

There are prizes to be won in each age group, generously sponsored by Highfield Garden Reserve, Mahurangi East Library, and The Photo Store.

Community voting for the favourite entry in each category begins on 22 July, while a panel of judges will select one Overall Winner from all entries.

The competition will conclude with a special Prizegiving Ceremony on Saturday 8th August, where winners will be announced and celebrated.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please email:

pip.stocking@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz



PHOTOGRAPHY STORY COMPETITION

School Holiday Programme

Scan me to register!



Donkey Tails from Highfield

Donkey Tails from Highfield is a charming children's storybook written by Jenny Roberts and beautifully illustrated by Julianne Edwards. Inside you will find four heartwarming tales inspired by real events at Highfield: *Off the Donkey's Back*, *Puddles*, *The Christmas Refusal*, and *Donkey Day*. Books cost \$20 (+p&p) with all proceeds going to Highfield. For more information on how to order, please visit: **www.highfelddonkeys.nz/shop**

Scrub Growers Visit



By Mark Becroft

Rodney Restore East recently invited us to a tour of *Scrub Growers* native plant nursery. Peter Caccia-Birch, Mike Reilly, Sharon Clark and Mark Becroft went down to Wainui (after a short detour due to a wrong turn near Puhoi) for a wander around the nursery. What a setup!

Rodney and Jane Straka started as ecologist consultants around twenty years ago and began by growing five thousand seedlings in a small patch in their garden in Wainui. This year, they have a staff of about thirty and 1.4 million seedlings are ready for planting out.

All of their seeds are eco-sourced. Jane starts collecting seeds from all over the region from January to April. It is important to use seed from the area where the plants will call home. She has seeds from Ridge Road. Did you know that Manuka growing in Hunua has a red tinge to the leaves? We saw a bed of a quarter of a million Manuka seedlings, many of which are destined for Tāwharanui, with others going to private land restoration and major roading works, to name just a few of their supply and planting projects. Scrub grows around ninety five varieties of native plant, with their core lines being made up of around twenty five varieties.

The seeds are harvested, dried, or fermented to remove the soft covering, or shaken out of their seed pods and put through a range of sieves to get only the best seeds, refrigerated for later, or planted immediately by a nifty machine straight into seed trays. They then go into the germination house to sprout. Once germinated, they go through another cool machine where the seedlings are popped out and planted in trays of twenty eight to grow some roots. A few months later they again go back into the potting shed to be taken out and planted into their final, larger pots to be put outside to “harden up”.

The slow movers, the likes of Kauri, Kōwhai, Kahikatea and Tōtara lounge around for a few years to grow bigger in the nursery. The rest of the plants are out the gate in under a year.

Scrub has four planting teams of five. About now, they are busy popping native plants into the soil in a variety of locations around north Auckland.



The number of plants per hour varies by the terrain and type of plant. They can plant up to 140 plants per hour, but the standard planter does around 100pph on their bigger reforestation projects. Through the summer months, the teams become involved with plant maintenance and pest control.

We were all keen to have a look around Scrub, as we are getting ready to plant out a new “Pocket Forest” in the Totara Grove corner at Highfield. More to come in the next Serenade.

Peter was given a few Rewarewa seed pods to propagate for Highfield. Good score!



Steve's Memorial

The past year has had its very sad moments with the sudden passing of our dedicated volunteer, friend and committee member Steve Luketina. Recently, we were joined at Highfield by Steve's whānau and former colleagues at the Auckland Council, the Coastguard and fishing club, to celebrate his many contributions and dedicate a kauri he had planted to "Steve - a friend to all".



Steve's whānau, friends and former colleagues all came together to remember him.



Norton's Return

In May we had a visit from Alan and Mary Norton, who now live in Nelson. Alan was the original Secretary/Treasurer of the Highfield Garden Advisory Committee last century. It was a great catch up and he was amazed at the continued development and growth of the Reserve.



(L-R) Mary Norton, Peter Caccia-Birch and Alan Norton.



Alan sitting in his chair (Norton's Rest) which he donated many years ago.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL: Annual membership is \$10 per household. Our financial year is from 1st July to 30th June.

For both new and renewal of membership/donations please send an email to the Membership Secretary at highfieldmembers@gmail.com with your full name, phone number and email address. Then direct credit the account below and include your **phone number** as reference. Highfield Garden Reserve and Donkey Society Incorporated **ASB 12 3095 0254516 00**.
Your help would be most appreciated.



www.highfelddonkeys.nz



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