

## REVEGETATION WINS

As we start organising things for this year's revegetation in the reserves, I'd like to share with you some of the small wins we've had over the past two years. Revegetation can be a tough gig sometimes. Physically it is challenging, especially when working in steep or slippery terrain, but then factor in all the possible environmental curve balls, making for some real touch-and-go situations. There are some areas where we absolutely nailed it and others where we've learned valuable lessons for next time. A solid team of enthusiasts who always show up happy and keen to contribute makes a world of difference, so thank you!

Ball Bay has seen us twice in the last two years, and though I don't have favourites, I view this site as one of our most prolific and promising! In late 2020 one of the reserves 'biodiversity hotspots' was fenced off from cattle and woody weed removal commenced here with David Bigg and his team. Large Hawaiian Holly, Olive, Porpieh, etc., were cleared and mulched onto the ground, laying the foundation for healthy soils and rich biodiversity. Plantings took place in 2021 and 2022, with about 350 trees planted each time. It makes me so happy to see this site now alive and THRIVING! Thanks to Jerry Cooke, the weeds are constantly being kept in order, and our natives have had the chance to take off. Already I can stand in the shade of the Pungas, Chaff Trees, and Birdcatchers. There are natives naturally regenerating everywhere, the ferns are reclaiming their rightful understory position, and our planted trees are already producing seed.

Moving to the West side of the island, Bumby's plants are slowly but surely taking hold. Our 2021 planting didn't do well, and we lost many trees, but our follow-up planting in 2022 was much more successful. The first part of the boardwalk has a lot of Tii, Flax, and Punga taking hold, while further down the creek, Flax, M'uu, and Coastal Coprosma are doing their bit to reduce erosion on the banks. Finding suitable species that can combat dry conditions, high winds, and poor soil is challenging, but we're finding the right plants for the job through trial and error.

One last site that I'd like to touch on is Cockpit, one of our most challenging areas. The original vegetation that occupied this



Clear water at Cockpit Creek, surrounded by native and naturalised wetland species

area would have consisted of wetland species. Through decades of industry, agriculture, and grazing, we've lost most, if not all, examples of a healthy 'Norfolk Freshwater Swamp' habitat. In 2020, a large portion of Cockpit Creek was fenced to exclude cattle, followed by two consecutive plantings in 2021 and 2022. Unfortunately, many plants either didn't survive or are growing very slowly. They had to contend with drought, flood, constant wind, and degraded soils, so there's little wonder that some gave up the ghost. However, the true win I see in this situation is the gradual return of the wetland plants! It may look messy or overgrown in some areas, but I can assure you it is how nature intended it. In amongst all that growth is a whole array of native plants! Species like Swamp Hibiscus (*Hibiscus diversifolius*), Slender Knotweed (*Persicaria decipiens*), Drain Flax (*Typha orientalis*), and many more are slowly making a comeback. They create habitat for freshwater insects, eels and crustaceans, slow water flow for better retention, and aid in reducing silt and nutrient run off into the ocean, amongst many other things! So though not all of our trees survived, the regeneration of this site is happening more naturally and organically. I've never seen such a diversity of freshwater plants, nor the water so clear.

We're preparing for this year's revegetation work as the weather cools down. Stay tuned for our upcoming community planting days! It's yorlyi who make this all possible.

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**Lilli-Unna King**

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT OFFICER**

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