



THE ORGANICS NETWORKER

Far North Organic Growers & Producers Society (Inc)

Issue 54 – Spring 2014

Field Day 25th Birthday Celebration

Details for the next FNOG Field Day:

Sunday, 9th November 2014

Gijs and Trish's property in

Kaeo

2614 Waiare Road

There will be cake ☺

***Please bring a chair and
a lunch to share.***

See you there! ☺

If you play a musical instrument please bring along to entertain us

DIRECTIONS:

From the Kerikeri roundabout, continue north on SH10 for approximately 28kms. Turn left into Waiare Road (also signposted as Puketi Forest) and travel 8kms (4kms of sealed road and 4kms of unsealed) until you arrive at a green letterbox with 2614 on it. If you are driving from the north down SH10, drive 3kms past Kaeo and turn right into Waiare Road. Parking will be through the farm gate to the right of the letterbox and concrete and drive. Please be sure to fasten the gate after parking. Walk up the concrete drive, past the veggie garden and workshop until you come to the white cottage.

Agenda:

10:30 start time with a cuppa.

Short introduction from the Chair.

Short chat from New World Remuera produce manager.

Mix n mingle.

12:00 shared lunch, after which we will cut the cake.

Folk can wander around the gardens, chat and relax.

About the Host Property

We have lived on this special land in the Waiare Valley for seven years and have enjoyed creating our certified organic paradise here at Uenuku. We are on 2 1/2 acres which incorporates many totara trees and other natives, an olive grove, a large vege garden, an orchard with herbal ley, beehives, chickens and ducks. We use organic, and biodynamic as well as permaculture methods of gardening. We recycle through composting, three worm farms and Bokashi.

Our home was built four years ago and was designed to be eco friendly with solar heating, wetback and using untreated building materials (as much as possible), double glazing, wool insulation and an eco system which uses an autoflow vermicomposter system for waste water.

We look forward to welcoming you all.

Trish and Gijs



New World Remuera opportunities

Following up on the recently distributed message about New World Remuera's keen interest in organic produce directly from the growers, we followed up with section head Abhi Patel. He immediately ordered all our freshly picked mandarins (60kg) without haggling over the price (\$1.15 higher than offered by Ceres!). As we had appointments in Auckland, we agreed to visit him at delivery.

Abhi explained his and his boss' Adrian's concept of making NW Remuera a specialist for organic products at prices no higher than for conventional products. Cutting out the wholesaler, the grower can get a higher price, the customer a lower price and NW more turnover. He has travelled around the South Island and southern North Island to look for organic growers already and is keen to find more. While the Remuera shop appears smaller than the one in Kerikeri, the turnover with regular retail customers as well as with restaurants and special buyers seems to be high. It is intended to create a website for organic food without using the name New World (which is prohibited) - something like an online club mainly for Auckland area clients.

Without being asked he suggested sharing transport cost, if Turners and Growers needs to be used.

Payment term offered is weekly! He is thinking of bi-weekly deliveries, but appears to be flexible. He wouldn't mind purchasing 100% of growers' productions, but obviously this will have to be well considered in regard to the risk of becoming too dependant on one client. And unwanted price-competition among the local producers should be avoided.

Abhi is interested in fresh and dried fruit, veggies, herbs, nuts, teas, etc. He explained that packaged food (i.e. fruit in bags) often attracts higher prices.

Jan Arie might be interested to hear that we saw yellow fresh limes at \$16.99 on the shelf.

Anyway, having always been scared of to approach NW Kerikeri for a long-drawn process to be accepted as supplier, we were positively impressed by the flexible method in Remuera. With the approval of Terry & Krissie we have invited Abhi to come to the FNOG Anniversary meeting on Nov 9 for the chance of a

small presentation and to mingle. He might come to Kerikeri for the weekend to meet with some other growers at their properties. In case of further questions, we can be reached upon our return home from Oct 1.

Green regards
Rolf & Inge



Certification Manager, Secretary, Wai Wurri Update for October 2014

Seems so long since our May field day at Kaitiaki, where 20 folks turned up and made it very successful indeed.

Then it was time to start planting the garlic, day after day it was top priority. I decided to plant Gji's shallots at the same time, giving them a space at the end of a garlic row.

As the garlic grew, I noticed it being munchd off at the tips. Whether it was quails, pheasants, rabbits, even sneaking around at night, I didn't see the culprits. So, purchased some affordable bird mesh and covered the lot with #8 wire hoops. Success.

Rain, floods, power cuts, floods and rain ~ no power for 7 days, no phone for 4 days and flooded in for 3 days, what a perfect time, when the freezer must remain shut, to get a pig in the trap! This one was gifted to a grateful friend with power.

As for pruning the fruit trees this year, one apple tree got partly done.

25th Sept. we removed bird mesh from the garlic to the calls of the Shining Cuckoo. Next day, ~ midnight raiders had been at it again! I give up, whatever we get, I'll be grateful. Unfortunately I can't see us having any shallots. Between the mysterious midnight raiders, neighbours stock in here and the continuous rain, the place now looks all fresh and flowery, seedlings growing by the minute, ducks laying ridiculous amounts of unfertilized eggs, bees already producing honey and the Twis behaving like jet propelled idiots.

When the sun's out one tends to forget all the other stuff.

Krisie

Some notes from Crest Lane Orchard

Slowly the orchard is coming into shape. The overcrowded rows are thinned to a more proper distance for an organic orchard. We are now spacing them at 3 meter in the row from the initial 1.5 metre. This enables us to give better care to the individual tree. Of course we have an initial drop in production, but amazingly that is only for about two years. Then there is a rapid increase in production again. With more open space the weed control is easier. Brush cutting the privet around the trunks keeps it under control.



A row of oranges thinned and pruned back one year ago.

The annual dose of mulch should release enough nutrients for the trees to produce a healthy and sustainable crop. We also hope that the mulch will increase the soil micro-organism activity, having found low zinc levels in the leaf analysis, but at the same time the soil zinc levels are abundant.

An other management change is our rejuvenation project. When we bought the old orchard, we knew that the trees in general were around 25 years old and well over the top of their productive life. We have now started to replace 3% of the trees each year. This should bring the average age of the orchard trees over time down to from over 30 years to around 17 years. We prefer to do it slowly and on a continuous basis rather than replacing a full block in one go. This way the old trees shelter the newly planted trees. We also replace the worse producing trees first, so we find a low impact on the production.

After testing a couple of rows with a deep mulch around the trunks for a couple of years we have decided to move to mulching all the trees twice a year. Hay is made on 2ha paddock we used to raise some cattle. Last year we were able to produce 800 small bales which we put around all the trees. The change to heavy mulching made it impossible to have fully free range chickens in the orchard anymore. Two or three days after you put the mulch around a tree the bugs would have gathered under the mulch. Then the chickens would remove the mulch and eat the bugs. Leaving the mulch on the sward and the weeds growing around the tree. So that was the end of the freerange chickens. We miss their eggs, but they tasted well.

In the end we hope to have a properly established well run certified organic orchard, from which we can continue to supply high flavour healthy produce, which is appreciated by our customers. The feedback we get from our customers nationwide is very positive and stimulates us to further improve our produce quality and assortment.



Row of fruit bearing mandarins on the background had 5 out of 6 trees removed. The mandarins in the foreground had 75% of trees removed.



New tree planted this winter to replace a dying one.

NatureZone's Garden And House Build Update

Hi everyone. Easter 2014 has seen us finally move into our new home. A project that has been on the boil for the past 6 years incorporating over 700 used tyres, 80 tonnes of soil/sand, 20 old concrete power poles and truck loads of sweat and laughter, and about 1500 wine or beer bottles used for underground insulation in each room, maybe that had something to do with the laughter. Some might remember viewing the build at the 2010 field day we hosted.



October 2010 Field day

I think this started after reading about Mike Reynolds' "The Garbage Warrior" who was building earthships out of rammed earth in tyres incorporating as much recycled material as possible. Inspired by John Kenderdine's "Sand Castle" we designed what our home has now become, "A Hybrid Earth Ship" Supporting an 18m x 14m hip roof, which Rob Moore kindly drew up some working plans which helped keep us from straying too far from the path. We milled most of the timber used from our property ourselves with the help of a local Millar. Our brief being to use as much local and recycled materials as possible to resemble locality, and incorporate our organic heritage and values. So mission on. It's also been quite an international effort by some great Wwoofers who have added their flavour and memory.

As work proceeded there were a few raised eyebrows within the local community as rumors emerged that the organic guy up the end of the road was building a house out of tyres hmmm strange that couple! Sometimes to effect positive change one has to push the boundaries of conventional thinking.

The tyres or what we like to describe as, "permanent circular modules" were rammed insitu with an earth mix and tied in with a bond beam locking everything together. We then rendered this with a mix of sand/clay/pine needles which when dried is like concrete, this was finished with a mix of sand/cement/hydrated lime/PVA glue then whitewashed with white cement/hydrated lime/PVA which worked like an undercoat sealer with great results.



Outside House 2014

Our new home has exceeded our expectations. A real pleasure to be in, a safe secure and quiet space, warm, dry and generous resonating the earth's frequencies within its meter thick walls and I think an absolute game changer for home building in the future. Tyres can be creating houses not landfills and with the right carbon credit scheme potentially could offset some degree of the cost of the build. There's something quite satisfying to build your own home without huge debt and engage your artistic flare. Time now for some landscaping!



Inside house 2014

As we are off-grid we are aware of our personal energy consumption so all lights etc are LED and what we've found to be our most critical power saving device is our "Freezerator", that's a chest freezer converted into a refrigerator. This makes an incredibly efficient fridge tweaked by internally adjusting the thermostat as it's a diaphragm type or alternatively by incorporating an external thermostat as we have done which is programmable. The result is fantastic, super power efficient and a constant temperature. My off grid system noticed no change with the addition. Goodbye gas and hello solar. Great for kids who normally stand there with the door wide open waiting for a snack to materialize from within the depths while losing all that cold air flowing over their ankles. The Freezerator is a winner which when customized out performs anything we have ever seen or owned and at a fraction of the price compared to energy efficient brands. This can also be used as a small cool store if need be as you can stack crates of produce etc, just dial the required temperature.

Regards Rich & Jose Van Alphen



The Far North Environment Centre is planning to have a collective display of environmental/organic organisations at the A&P Show next February. We have done this in the past and it has been a great way for small groups to showcase their achievements for the last year.

Feb may seem like a long way away but we would like people to start thinking now about if, or how they would like to be involved and possibly come up with some innovative ideas as to how we can present it all.

Previously we had NRC, DOC, Land Care groups, organics (FNOG, TOPIS) and I think the share of the costs was less than \$20 per group. We had an organic food caravan and a restful place for stressed out Mums to sit and relax with their kids, and it was all in a horseshoe layout so we were all connected.

All ideas are welcome - info@ecocentre.co.nz - 408 1086 - maybe interested people could have a chat about it at the 25th Anniversary day??



MISSION STATEMENT OF FAR NORTH ORGANICS & PRODUCERS

- To gather and seek information pertinent to the organics movement
- To publish this information for the benefit of growers and producers of organic food and related products
- To be a forum, a community and a marketplace for organic growers and producers and their supporters

To present this knowledge and information in a professional and impartial manner

FNOG COMMITTEE 2014

Chairman

Terry Higginson

Vice Chair

Elfriede Patek

Secretary

Kris Khaine

Minutes Secretary

Wendy MacPherson

Treasurer

Jan Arie Kamsteeg

Financial Auditor

Peter Brake

Networker Publisher

Jose Van Alphen

Committee Members

Terry, Jan Arie, Kris, Wendy, Trish and Gijs Veling, Tony Achtzehner, Inge Bremer, Jim Valley.

Certification Manager

Kris

Certification Auditors

Terry & Jan Arie

Certification Committee

Jan Arie, Terry, Kris, Jim.