



THE ORGANICS NETWORKER

Far North Organic Growers & Producers Society (Inc)

Issue 71 – Autumn/Winter 2020



Chairman's Report

Greetings members, I hope this finds you all well and in good spirits in this post Covid world. Due to the Covid response our Autumn/Winter Field Day that was scheduled to be held at Jan Aries and Ineke's orchard at Pamapurua has had to be cancelled. However, we have a pretty weighty Networker to make up for it so thank you to all who contributed to keep this publication interesting.

Thank you Carol and Graeme Smylie for being our gracious hosts for our previous Field Day/AGM. The tiny house is amazing, and I am jealous of those rocks you have! I know you both will be up to something with those.

As agreed at the meeting on the day John Kenderdine and myself penned a letter to the Far North District Councillors, CEO of District Health Board, CEO of NRC and various Community Board members calling for a moratorium on the roll out of the 5G Network etc. To date there has been no response or acknowledgement of receipt.

The on-going battle with the GMO's with NRC seems to be slowing progressing with the three main opponents, NZ Bio Tech, Life Sciences network and Fed Farmers all pulling out as we head to the Environmental Court. Hopefully now NRC will come to its senses and protect our coastal marine area! A big shout out to GE Free Northland for spearheading this intervention.

The Organic Regulation Bill has been released for submissions. I hope those that are OFNZ certified heeded John Clarke's call for you to put in a submission. It never ceases to amaze me that the Government or Councils will spend a year or two on a project and then give the public a matter of weeks to digest it and then get a submission in!

Certification Manager – As Jose informed you all at our last meeting, she will be hanging up the CM hat at our next AGM in March. This will specifically affect ALL OFNZ producers. A replacement for this position would ideally be OFNZ certified, have a solid understanding of the Biogro Standards, and be organised. Please contact me if you are willing to be active in this role.

It has been quite noticeable of the lack of interest OFNZ producers are showing in the turnout at Field Days, only one at the last Field Day with no Apologies given. Remember this is a voluntary organisation to keep costs down. If you are certified OFNZ, ask yourself when was the last time you supported this organisation! Attended a Field Day, contributed to the raffle, wrote an article or even gave your apology for the meeting! Be aware that other regions charge considerably more if you are not prepared to contribute.

Here is what the committee looks after the AGM ...

Chair - Richard Van Alphen, Vice Chair – Jan Arie Kamsteeg,

Treasurer – Inge Bremer, Secretary – Carol Smylie

Committee, Richard Van Alphen, Jan Arie Kamsteeg, Inge Bremer, Carol Smylie, Jose Van Alphen, Gijs Veling, Kristen Khaine, Terry Higginson, and Jo Picollo,

Auditors – Rich, Terry and Jan Arie

Certification Committee, Rich, Terry, Jan Arie and Jose

Certification Manager – Jose Van Alphen

Networker Publisher - Jose



Wai Wurri Update

Greetings to our members and hoping you are all able to continue to produce your own food in your gardens that give us that connection to our Mother Planet and take us into a place that gives us peace and balance, away from all the constant banter about what is & isn't apparently going on.

For the very first time since 1987 when we found our land, our ponds are dry, but fortunately there is still enough water in the creek that supports the continuity of our eels, which I have been feeding for about 20 years. Not as many though, but they are always glad to see me and food scraps. They haven't been hand fed for a while, as granddaughter who likes to pick them up and rub their bellies is now at secondary school, her major interest - horse riding.

Last week we had to let our beautiful adopted Bonnie dog be put to sleep, as the cancer she had when we got her at 8 yrs old, took over. We had nearly 3 years of pure joy from her, supported on natural medicines and lots of love. The rabbits around here have realised she has gone, so are now extra cheeky, including the black ones that are really very lovely. For now, while Terry is off his feet, they are perfectly safe! But, after pretty much a year on crutches, unbearable pain, cancellations, lack of anaesthetists, Covid, he finally gets his operation very soon.

With all this going on I have had barely enough energy to keep the garden going, but I didn't have to. It just continued to self-seed and there are oodles of greens to pick, once again, thanks Mother Nature.

The fruit trees pushed my patience though, heaps and heaps of fruit, but none of it went to waste apart from some small feijoas, left to the birds to play with. Dehydrating, freezing and bottling and sharing. Whether we actually get a winter or not, they'll still be nice in and with the muesli. As for the grapes, without the market for selling our fruit, we get it turned into wine plus we shared boxes of them with family and neighbours. One neighbour brings over bottles of apple, grape and persimmon juice, from our fruit. On muesli, Heaven.

We've had some rain, tanks are full, garden's lush again, Tuis going nuts everywhere. Everything is as good as it can be until you go to town! Happy days everyone,

Kris Khaine



NatureZone Gardens

Phew ... that would have to of been one of the hottest driest summers we have experienced in the Far North for the past 30 years. It has been an incredibly tough season, with half the annual rainfall the previous year, we certainly entered this drought with a deficit. Our irrigation pond literally disappeared before our eyes in February causing all sorts of issues.

We used the opportunity to clean out the pond so next summer we will be more prepared. It was great to see eels of all sizes slithering around in the slush and it was with great amusement for the digger operator that we would stop him and rescue them to a "safe" place before work commenced. We also have a beautiful pile of raw peat to play with now Yum!!

This year we have replaced most of the weed matting that is used for garlic. We had a 16-year run with the last lot so a pretty good innings. Instead of cutting holes in the new roll Jose came up with the idea of burning holes in it with a gas torch and a jig. This worked a treat, is extremely fast compared to cutting and no frayed edges.



The garlic crop is finally planted, all tucked in for the next 6 months. People often ask us when is the best time to plant out. There are a few factors to consider, the main one being is there enough moisture in the soil in May. We planted out 2 days before the full moon in May and again 2 days before full moon in June as the rest of the growing beds were not moist enough in May. My theory is that at this time a strong signal to germinate is activated and root development is enhanced as the energy is "pulled into" the earth with the descending phase, as the new moon passes, this enhances leaf development and pulls the shoot up and out the ground.



As a rule of thumb, it's worked well for us over the last 3 decades, as has our new pair of knee pads.

Cheers Rich and Jose



Ineke – Crest Lane Orchard

It was nice to see Jan Arie's sister and her husband again in March of this year. They came over from The Netherlands for a family visit, went to their daughter on Kapiti Coast, then to us and together we went to our twins' birthday in Hamilton. So far so good. Birthday celebrated - company, barbeque and cake enjoyed. COVID 19 was already in the brewing so we listened to every news bulletin and really had to go back home on the 24th. No flights to The Netherlands, according to the travel agency. Best to take sister and husband home with us so they would not end up in a hotel room in Auckland.

This appeared to be a wise decision. All of us felt comfortable in each other's company. Each couple had their own bathroom and toilet, Ineke did all the shopping and Jan Arie the deliveries. Organised. But how to keep these 70-year old's busy? They are people who enjoy useful activities, while we – only just over 60 – are just winding down. They ended up doing the things we had been procrastinating: cleaning windows, building a sieve installation for the worm farm, making a cupboard for electric tools in the garage, and baking big apple pies for the freezer ...

Every day they were checking if there would be a flight for them that would bring them back to their other children and grandchildren. When at last there was one, they were reluctant to go. The Netherlands were not as safe for COVID19 as our Far North and they had not finished their jobs! We had to push them a bit, otherwise they would have stayed for we did not know how long.

A pity though we have to do the other jobs ourselves now.

Grin,
Ineke



CHANGING FOCUS (When realism catches up with romantics)

We were in a bit of a dilemma when we bought the block next door. It was flat- well- flattish. Instead of being so steep that you could plant both sides of it, most this land was coverable on a quad bike. And we were foresters so the luxury of easily accessible areas meant it was too valuable for trees so a venture into horticulture was called for.

Macadamias looked a sturdy tree. They didn't look as if they needed much care. Huge claims were being made for their profitability. They looked a possibility for someone who lived 400 km from their land. 1500 trees later and a packing shed with husker, drier, sorter-cracker, three mowers and a tractor, we were underway. An inspiring fellow called Terry Higginson visited and suggested that as we were apparently following organic practices, we should apply for registration.

It didn't quite work out. The venture soaked up huge amounts of money. Maintenance of the trees and pasture demanded more attention than envisaged. The best part was that, on site, a fellow happily worked outdoors for 11 hours a day and slept soundly for 11 hours. What was required, we were advised, was more 'value-added' product. So, registered commercial kitchen, insulated trailer with wheel-out sales trolley, butter-maker, chocolatier, gas-flusher and vacuum-packer, jars and labels and six more motorised machines were added to the venture. Huge sales. Enormous outgoings. It wasn't working.

What was required, we were advised, was a simplified process. Just do bulk nuts. The next year's crop was gas-flushed and vacuum-packed into half-kilo and kilo bags. The whole crop sold in one sale to an agent in Wellington. \$40 a kg. Much easier.

Three years of bulk sales later, the balance sheet was still heavily lop-sided. What was needed was a crop that required less processing. Ah- lemons. A lemon orchard was planted and before long Fresh-Direct was taking all we could grow. Ah- passionfruit. Before long 125 T-bars and frames were erected and passionfruit and rosellas were doing battle. Ah- tamarillos. A tamarillo orchard was established and boxes of tams were added to the lemon output. Then the wheels fell off again. We were spread too thinly. Although by this time we'd moved to Kerikeri and I spent three days a week in a cottage on the property, attending to nuts, passionfruit, lemons and tams was wonderfully

entertaining but demanding. The best part was 12 hours a day work and 12 hours a day sleep.

Then, as part of logging 10,000 tonnes of radiata over a wet winter, the loggers decided that an alternative to sliding down the greasy logging road, for safety they'd just plough their 14-tonne log carrier through the tamarillo orchard, - crushing trees, irrigation lines and gates before them. Re-establishing all this would take time. But it coincided with a deep conversation with the logging agent concerning not only reinstatement but that the logging cheques were falling short of what was expected. The agent's reply was forthright. "If you're silly enough to grow a low-value crop 190km from the nearest market then you can only expect low returns." (It costs about \$90-100 a tonne to get a log from a tree in Honeymoon Valley to Port Whangarei). "Why not try growing manuka instead?" he suggested. So, the lemon, tamarillo and macadamia orchards were leased out for \$1 a year.

We've planted the first 4000 manuka plants. The commercial oil distillery is well underway. Steam boiler installed, stainless steel wire mesh baskets made to hold 1300 litres of manuka fronds. The former macadamia drying room is now the condenser room. Sold- one 1800mm cut hydrostatic mower and tractor and mower and enter, 10 sheep. (Sheep don't eat manuka). It's another wonderful horticulture venture. With my history of things falling over, it doesn't really matter. It's such fun. And I sleep better; - well, over there I do.

Richard Ward





Dear Krissie and Terry,

We are wishing you all the best for the forthcoming surgery and for the hopefully speedy recovery! We are thinking of you! And of course, heartfelt thanks for 3 decades of secretaryship for FNOG, Krissie! What a long, long wait on crutches! We are in the Far south, and I just sent a bit of a report to Jose and Rich about what we have been doing in the past few days:

Hi, trip is going really well. Today we attended a seminar by Walter Jehne in Gore, with 60 sheep farmers. Walter is a soil microbiologist who is talking about the soil as the carbon sponge, holding up to 60% water if it has enough nutrients in it. He promotes farmers as the saviours of climate change who should send a bill to the government for sequestering so much carbon with their sensibly grazed paddocks. Of course, he means re-generative farmers only. Very good speech and we can use many of the arguments and explanations for our Carbon Neutral website.

Rain is plentiful here, and for Northland (he gave 3 speeches there) the recommendation is to plant more trees but the right ones. Tim Shadbolt attended Walter's seminar here and had a photo taken with him where he placed his mayors' chain around Walters neck. Tim wants "his" farmers to excel in soil management. Our day yesterday was with 4000 sheep, shifting them (by calling, no dogs, and all very peaceful) They are shifted twice to 4 times daily, so always have new grass, of which they only eat the upper one third. They have 106 paddocks for rotation. Their poop gets lightly trodden in and the grass booms. No fertiliser, no poisons, almost no vet bills, very little machine use.

The day before we got a Stirling Moss 4-wheel ride through the Catlin paddocks from a friend: beautiful weather, great views of the bays, and a visit to Curio Bay where we saw our first and only Hector dolphins 25 years ago.

Cheers, Inge & Rolf



thoughts from wandering around the lake --

walking in the garden
walking in the forest,
seeing the plants, flowers and trees,
dancing their way into being,
choreographed by birdsong
under the baton of the tail of the piwakawaka.

cheers, john k



I saw a man,
An old Cilician, who occupied
An acre or two of land that no one wanted,
A patch not worth the ploughing, unrewarding
For flocks, unfit for vineyards; he however
By planting here and there among the scrub
Cabbages or white lilies and verbena
And flimsy poppies, fancied himself a king
In wealth, and coming home late in the evening
Loaded his board with unbought delicacies.



From John Kenderdine ...

A growing number of people are working on how to address food insecurity and a lack of community resilience in the Far North.

Community can be as big or small as locals want to define it. It could be thought of as recreating the old party line phone system??

As a really simple case, imagine there is an unused shop or someone's private garage, available to a local community group. One day a week, local gardeners bring their excess food to that shop, and swap what they have to get what they haven't grown. Anything not taken is given to Women's Refuge for their clients. The Hub operates as a 'Crop Swap' facility for locals.

Take it up a step. Local growers grow deliberately for the Hub. Twice a week, the food is brought in and packed in boxes and picked up by locals who have a standard weekly order. The Hub now supports CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) and is operating as the 'Kai Box' scheme did in Kaitia for a couple of years.

Take it up another step. The hub buys dry goods in bulk and breaks it down into smaller, cheaper parcels (flour, rice, sugar etc.). The hub is run by volunteers and is open every day and sells local fruit and vegetables through retail sales and also has the Kai Box system. People who work as volunteers get a 20% reduction on any goods they buy.

Take it up another step. The hub is a cooperative that does everything the hub does above, plus it has a van for remote area delivery AND for trading surplus items with the Hub in Kaeo, and the Hub in Papatia and Mangamuka.

Take it up another step. The hub is run as a business by a couple with a social conscience. They take a living wage and put profits back into the community to assist other food ventures and get other hubs up and running.

Right now, there is a crop swap facility running out of the old Herald building in Kohukohu, a 240-member cooperative shop selling local fruit and vegetables plus dry goods in Hikurangi and a 350-member cooperative operating within Whangarei. In Moerewa and Ohaeawai, there are infant hubs that fit between. In Kaeo, Kaikohe and Kerikeri there are people wanting to build a hub.

There is help available to get things started but there has to be local initiative and enthusiasm to make it work.

We are interested in talking with people interested in progressing these ideas – if you can help with ideas or actions please contact us so that we can get started.

john@cleangreenmachine.co.nz or 09 406 7774

P.S. We are expecting to do a lime plastering course during the July school holidays (4th-26th so maybe about the 18th July), date etc to be confirmed please contact John Kenderdine on the above phone or email closer to the date. This will be held Lake Ngatu area.

Cheers,



Ake Ake Vineyard & Winery

Two of the questions I get asked a lot at our cellar door is “what is organic wine?” and “is organic wine as good as regular wine?”

Answering the second question first, of course it is. You can get good and bad organic wine and good and bad regular wine. In fact in my experience you are less likely to find bad organic wine because the wine grower needs to put the effort in and grow the best grapes they can, as under organic rules there is a lot less messing around allowed with the wine in the winery than with non-organic wine.

You are allowed to add sulphur to the wine as a preservative, but organic wine has a much lower maximum than non-organic wine. Adding copper and wine concentrate is common but not allowed in organic wine!

In my vast experience of wine consumption and over indulgence, I have found I am much more likely to feel worse for wear drinking a non-organic wine than an organic wine due to the lack of additives in the organic wine

Because there is less manipulation in the winery of the organic wine, they can sometimes taste slightly different, maybe funkier or earthier but with more character and interesting flavours than mass produced supermarket wines.

A few years ago, my wife got me a book out of the library called “Natural Wine”.

At first glance the book appeared to be about undrinkable weird wine made by dirty French hippies. However, once I got past page two, I found it was a fascinating and inspiring book. Natural wine generally follows bio dynamic principles in the vineyard. The idea is the wine is an expression and reflection of the vineyard, the soil, weather, vines, people, the “terroir”.

Only the yeast that grapes have on them from the vineyard are used for fermentation. Nothing is added to the wine, if barrels are used, they are older barrels so no oak flavour is noticed in the wine. The wines are not filtered, so sediment may appear in the bottle and wines may not be totally clear, these wines are not destined for the supermarket so who cares if they don't look perfect.

Horses instead of tractors are also very common in the vineyard, even to the point where the wine must be taken from the vineyard to the winery by horse and cart rather than motorised transport. Another thing I noticed from photos of these vintners is that they all have beards, except some of the female vintners. Natural wine has become popular in some places that there are now bars in The Loire Valley and Paris that only sell natural wine.

The book inspired us to produce some preservative free wines that we are now in our fifth year of producing, however we haven't had the balls yet, nor is there much interest yet from enough of the New Zealand public to venture further down the natural wine road. I have grown a beard though, and if I ever win the lottery..... Having reread this piece, I notice I haven't really answered the first question in the first sentence, another time.

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Thoughts from Te Kahu Orchard

Well, what a different 3 months we have had. Although Graeme and I worked as usual as GPs in Kawakawa it was largely telephone consultations and folks who needed to be seen were welcomed into a rather dismal dental caravan in our car park. This kept potential infection away from all staff except for ourselves!

Neither of us feels comfortable with remote medicine, we like the reassurance of putting a hand on the belly if needed. So are very pleased that things are returning to normal.

However, the silver lining is that our son and his pregnant wife who live in London decided to move home to New Zealand and avoid the misery of lockdown in a London flat and are currently living with us. We will have a brand-new grandson in the Spring. Another bonus to having them is that with the scarcity of WWOOFERS some extra hands are very helpful.

We've used our 'confinement' time when not actually at work to reflect on what we'd like to do on our orchard.

We decided to put in a mixed woodland on one of our boundaries, so Graeme is in the final throws of planting 32 assorted oaks, liquid ambers, alders and elms. They should eventually put on a magnificent show of colour in Autumn.

After spending 3 hours digging the first hole, we got in our friend Brett from Rock River Contracting to bring his large auger and a couple of hours later he had them all dug.

Kay Baxter does not recommend this method saying the holes fill up like a swimming pool and do not drain well. We put in olives a year ago by the same method and so far, they seem to be thriving, hopefully we will say the same in another couple of years.

We've also been clearing the pond area (lots of nice weed now in my compost heaps) and are researching wetlands and what to plant. I'd like to attract frogs onto the property.

My vegetable gardens have been prolific all summer and we're still eating mostly out of the garden. Our daughter in law says she has never eaten such healthy food in her life. To feel we are providing wonderful fresh organic food to our developing grandson is very rewarding and confirms to us growing organically is the right thing to do for future generations and the planet.

Carol



“ECONATION 2020” AOTEAROA

I wonder if any FNOG members out there has one of those signs hanging about the sheds? A green sign with those words on in white letters, and a white circle containing a Koru. I picked one up off the roadside a few years back, grass and weeds growing over it like a cancelled event no one wants to be reminded of. I think Soil and Health ran an “organic 2020” campaign at the same time? Anyway, I thought it would be nice to honour the spirit of those”

organic eco warriors” with enough courage to promote such a bold vision. That we would indeed be considered an eco-nation this year. I found it pride of place over my Mud room door. During our now famed “lock down” I became to contemplate its presence, about its meaning and abandonment.

Another reason I was drawn to that sign, was it happened to coincide with the date of my own, strategic vision for my land project. I figured 2020 as a point I would be able to stand back and assess my performance against my aims and goals. I consider this year my kind of graduation year in more than one way, having just completed my studies in Psychology. Wow what timing for a holiday, Lockdown couldn’t be more perfect. You will be pleased to know I could not diagnose myself with any accepted forms of mental illness.

Maybe we did achieve an “organic nation” of sorts in 2020? Covid 19, in the absence of a conventional drug or medicine, saw the public health system adopt an organic philosophy. An isolation management strategy to avoid spreading it around. Something I never thought I would see in my lifetime. Who would have believed a tiny microorganism could cause such disruption throughout the world? That aeroplanes would stop flying and motor ways could echo in silence? Certainly, it clocked up a few points for Mother Earths struggle against the stealthy weapons of neo- liberalism. The driving force behind human behaviour we all partake in, when we get up each morning. So, the lock down ensued, and we all got sent to our rooms to think about what we have been doing (a quarantine site), just as we would with a sick animal or some such, on our property to protect the remaining herd. Well that’s how I saw it. Pretty amazing how well kiwis accepted that I thought. I heard from various acquaintances, howls of horror and shock that their overseas holidays were ruined, their businesses would be destroyed, and even the fearful “oh my god people are dying”. (Apologies to anybody wounded from those comments) Personally, I had very little such concerns, to the level of feeling guilty I wasn’t being affected enough. Actually, I rather enjoyed the unfolding stories, and how the air we breathe started to clear, and how people all of a sudden had time to slow down and consider life, much like a compulsory meditation for the world. So much positivity, creativity and realisations from people Things stated for years as “impossible” suddenly became “best practice” with a view to carry on even into the future.

Of course, I missed the jumping in the car and driving around that I would normally do, but largely I continued an extremely happy existence in my little bubble. Way too happy for some I talked to. I guess the fact I committed to not traveling by air about 15 years ago helped a bit. Plus, after a ten-year apprenticeship of living simply I reduced a lot of wants so they simply were not missed. I feel more qualified now to at least judge what is important in my life, and what to miss. Judging objectively what is “excess” and what is “need”, after 30 years as a “Petrolhead” is not always easy. Hard to believe I once owned seven cars just so I didn’t have to experience a “car-less day”. So

back to my more recent dreams of life transition about ten years ago. Still involving wheels, I drove my 1964 Ford House truck onto a new property in the Hokianga to set up home, in 2010. (Because I only have so much time to finish this I will continue more succinctly)

The “brief” that I gave myself in 2011

To become self-sufficient in food enough for a family of 5, utilising a Pescatarian diet while maintaining a very low income, living simply with no electricity.

To eventually become carbon neutral, a self-sustaining land parcel with as little inputs as possible so that the land becomes truly sustainable without “money” or inputs. (employing hand tools as much as possible).

To aim for no use of fertilisers, utilise my knowledge of soil building techniques using water harvesting, plants, and small animals only (un hooved)
To use as little irrigation as possible and employ Permaculture water harvesting techniques.

To utilise only my own labour (very important) without any other help except once off machine earth works needed. (aimed at 2 days per week total commitment of my own time).

To employ as many reused and recycled materials as possible.

To utilise the excess or surplus produce (of the 4 family members not present) to generate income to provide for the lands needs in terms of ongoing maintenance and development.

To propagate and grow as many plants as possible using my own skills without “money”.

To create a sanctuary garden for myself and a nice place to live.

To if possible, become certified organic.

To be congruent with my teaching job in organics and permaculture.

Kevins resources list breakdown @ 2011

Land consists of a 5,333 square metre section, hill side property in Rawene Purchased for 70K without finance in late 2009 which was devalued to 30k one year later by VNZ.

Has a double garage with concrete floor and iron roof.

Property is subject to serious subsidence, and the previous house moved so much it was removed after being paid out from Earthquake insurance fund. A bore near the house site found no solid ground 20 metres deep!

Soil mostly heavy yellow / very dark grey clay, very low fertility, and predominantly 45% gradient with up to 70% and 85% in places, some had been ridiculously grazing cows.

A few sick fruit trees and a metal drive way were already there, plus a large Manuka and a small shed/ chicken house Many gaping holes where the earth had cracked open and slipping away.

Kevin's attitude and thoughts. A perfect "permaculture" property to prove to myself my own skills and knowledge. To show its possible to grow all my own food, on a property deemed very poor and degraded. A land now deemed "worthless" in terms of investment and Finance. Nobody in their right mind would buy this land to grow food on! or build a house! Any building will require engineers report, huge money and grovelling to council. (Positive being, when I die my kids won't be able sell it for apartment development)

One large house truck that could be driven on and sited with all the necessities needed to live in while perusing the dream.

A permanent well paid, local, part time job in walking distance.

Progress up to 2020

Property was purchased in 2010

Plan was made in 2011 when I started living there

Had chemical residue test done in 2011. / all clear. Achieved full organic certification in 2014/

Real work on plan started in 2012 with earthworks digging 2 dams, one held water the other holds only temporary.

2012 Planted 200 Tagasastes, and many other support species.

Between 2012 to 2014 Created many swales and shaped most of the site by hand with a shovel and spade, planted around a 1000 support plants plus fruit trees.

2016/ part 2 of earthworks on top steepest part of land once stability demonstrated by lower plantings.

Planted around another 300 support species

2018/19 so about seven good years of my own work and money invested, no one has ever helped me in any way.

Having been living on an income of less than 23k most of that time, fairly happy with my performance on that.

Big challenge was losing my Tutor employment when they closed the Rawene polytechnic. I took a role as groundsman @ 14k for 2 years and was a student for 2 years at about the same money. So very little capital available, certainly kept me true to that aim!

Propagating from seed and cuttings with my own knowledge, hundreds of plants. I also managed a few exciting acquisitions from the local Polytechnic grounds (managed organically by me) before it closed, having been established by some permaculture minded folk 30 years back.

Biggest challenges to goals

One was going back to using a weed-eater, and abandoning hand tools in 2016. Having to use one as a groundsman, I found it hard to go home and do scything. At the same time, I had a lot of animal death's reducing vegetation control.

Selling surplus to cover development costs worked only about 50%, created extra work being hardly worth it except for fruit, and cherry tomatoes. I did gain a lot from Bata for things like firewood.

Chicken and duck food. I really wanted to design a chicken and duck food system such as a worm farm, or a maggot farm that could avoid buying any animal feed, permanently. Mulberries were so bloody delicious they never got any of those.

I purchased certified organic food for many years, even driving to Whangarei to pick it up. Eventually the cost broke me. The fact nobody would buy an egg for \$1 each, (the true cost needed in my view), really nailed it. I don't sell any eggs now consequently. During the lock down (SPCA, vegan alert) I experimented feeding them twice per day, for 3 weeks on apples, pears, and bananas only. I finally stopped for fear if I tripped over, they would peck my flesh off! maybe if I had macadamia nuts it could work? or if insect population was higher? So, I consider myself a real failure in that department. Maggots are just a bit beyond my cultural meter. I also buy cat food, another non organic input I am not proud of, but they also get a lot of eggs, and the odd possum.

It's a big challenge to actually certify my house and everything I do, as in most situations you can put a fence around home so it's not part of the certification. The garden is my home.

Losing the job was the biggest challenge of all, along with a resource base, including my year's supply of macadamia nuts. Huge emotional stress also.

Not just the loss of employment but the government abandonment of “organic education”, something that I had become quite passionate about.

Achievements

Obviously, anything that has to be quantitatively measured is difficult to show without data, either way, as a personal pass or fail. In just reporting by observation. I don't grow enough veges for a family of 5 that's for sure. It's such a waste of time when people can't or won't pay for any surplus at a reasonable price. Also, over this time, I have learnt so many options of perennial greens to eat for myself taking much less work. Growing veges is extremely hard work in my book.

Fruit wise I believe I have achieved well, with bananas the best. I have one good avocado from Miriam Tyler, My proudest producer on my seemingly impossible soil and land. So many others have perished over the years. This drought has been a huge test for it! Nuts are another thing still coming in the next ten years, I hope? I really, really need these for a protein source. Plus, more avocados.

Bees

I planted over 200 Lavenders and 100 Rosemary plants, in first 2 years. Almost all dry loving herbs perish in a couple of years, once they get a wet Hokianga winter. If only they could have waited till this year! However, now my species diversity ensures year-round huge bee populations, and very high pollination rates. Don't do honey, but certainly could. Peak bees is here!

Frogs

There were no frogs when I arrived. I now have hundreds and thousands, which get rather loud in the summer months, very satisfying all the same. The cats upset me by eating a lot of them, and the tad poles are great duck food, so good organic food source, I guess? If only I was bit more French.

Birds

Massive increase, to the point of it being a negative, even the cats can't limit them. Still when it comes to pest control who knows what the balance is? The point is I created the increase from next to nothing, mainly due to bamboo shelter and massive diversity of plants, mostly exotic birds but natives too, including a Morepork, and huge grey Herons in the poplars.

Biodiversity

You would be hard pressed to beat the diversity of plants, trees and consequential foliage, roots and flowers, especially planted in such meaningful ways on a square meter basis. Plants are my hardest farm workers

and I know every one of them who speak to me regularly. Abyssinian bananas are my all-time favourite, and have saved many trees from certain death, by my strategic planting of them. They are so useful for mulching to avoid cardboard chemicals, and when they end life, turn into massive worm farms.

Nitrogen fixers

I found the absolute best “soil relationship” nitrogen fixing plants, brush wattles (the weeds). All of the clovers, gorse, and casuarinas’. Experts say that buttercup trees(cassia) don’t have the capability, but I’m not convinced because they forge such an amazing fast carbon pathway. There has to be some mechanism going on we haven’t learnt about yet. I am happy to accept “magic happens” when it comes to nature. No need for scientific evidence when you can experience effect, who cares why? Plants don’t lie like humans do!

I found Tagasaste very marginal, the clay just doesn’t work for them, but are a good source of protein in leaf matter for the rabbits and mulching. Lemon tree borer attacks them savagely.

Firewood

After 7 years there is now getting firewood size pruning’s from fruit trees and support plants, although these are mostly used for landscaping, swale creation, or “chopndrop” in the food forest.

Drought and shelter

The bamboo has performed amazing, slow at first but after 5 years awesome. The garden would not be possible without it, against westerly winds. The food forest canopy trees also showed me just how amazing they work this year, especially Albizzias and Tipawanu Tipu in about year 5. (Not quite Brazil yet but by god close to it this year)

Garden stakes and mulch

Now self-sufficient in any size bamboo for garden and building and fencing needs, and flax for ties. Bamboo provide mulch for all garden needs, animal beds in addition to grasses.

Ponds/ swales

One is the absolute heart of the property, provides hydration, sun reflection in winter, heat storage, azolla weed for garden beds. Swale feed for temperate food forest controls eutrophication. Other ponds work as swales really, as they empty in summer. A frogs dream!

A perfect rice paddy one day.

So much debate about swales, but I consider them essential in such a harsh condition trying to operate without irrigation or fertilisers. Many support

species would never have survived without them in first years. After ten years fertility is starting to stabilise.

I have not had to water any fruit trees past year 1, and no irrigation lines, so I consider that a pass.

Overview

I am fairly happy with my performance overall, could always be better looking (aesthetically). If I spent more time at home, it could have been. I have always felt it important not to make it a binding chore. To allow for good design to prove itself by giving results without work. I Have stayed true to 100 hours thinking to every 1 hour worked. There are so many design features in there I have evolved over 10 years I can't even remember half of them.

Living without electricity has been invaluable for the lessons learnt in place of turning on a gadget, or even a light bulb. I also think I have gained a more spiritual connection with nature. A more comforted outlook to life, as person with no religious affiliations or beliefs.

When the project started, I was Tutor at the Local polytechnic and always had a garden there to demonstrate and work with people on, so this was never part of the plan to make a site for demonstration. Plus, as a deep introvert, I need a sanctuary from my worldly participations. Paths and workspaces are very intense, making it difficult for groups of people, or for others to take over when I die. Definitely not wheelchair or push chair friendly, and there are lots of hazards for children. So that would be another failure in a way. That I did not think about the changes possible enough.

I would have liked to have built a Whare in the shed by now but for me priority has always been the land, and food first. The house truck was very adequate for my needs. Now that it appears, I am not due to vanish down the hill, or drop dead, perhaps graduation year will be looking towards this and preparing for old age. Seems I am getting there rather quickly. As my Mother keeps reminding me "how am I going to climb up in that bloody house truck when you get old?" I don't know how old is to her, she's 91 so I guess I have few years to get that sorted out.

Reflection

Well now that I know it's possible, I plan to give up this organic, sustainability nonsense, and go back to building Hot Rods. Move back to city and get a haircut and get a real job. The world is just going to keep buying more ambulances to put at the bottom of the cliff. Why bother doing anything different?

That's what I have honestly thought at times, during the last year of study. Especially in the subjects of behaviour modification and social psychology. Then came Covid 19?

That compulsory meditation was so good for me. It gave me comfort that my new direction was not such a silly choice that was out of step with the dominant social world. Plus, even though I had those fantasies about going back, I couldn't do it anyway. Because I am no longer that person I once was. I feel so strongly to help the children of the world now somehow. Fun has changed its meaning.

So, what about that contemplation of "eco nation" sign and campaign? Why it failed? What is it? Probably the biggest reason, nobody knows what it is. How would I have described that to a student to try and achieve as a learning outcome? It's all about psychology and education in my view. Pretty fluffy stuff for a tick box?

I would best define it as.....

When most of a nation's population, believe and act as if the economy is a subset of the environment.

No need to mention anything else.

We are all born into captivity! We have been taught to believe and act, exactly the opposite. That, the environment is a subset of the economy. That's why we can't stop destroying the planet until we perceive death or extinction, requiring change. Even then the cry is to get back to "normal" as soon as possible, to get rid of the fear.

Covid 19, as an intrinsic part of the evolving, living environment, has helped to shift this kind of thinking along, but there is a long way to go. Nature is not going to negotiate with us in the last hour. I feel confident there are children coming through now who will be able to bring this change. Enough to fence off the cliff from the human sheep. I for one are happy to go on with this thought anyway. I want to be the best sheep I can be.

To keep tabs on what I am up to please check out the Rainbow Hills Sustainable Futures Trust website <http://rainbowhills.weebly.com/>

Kindest regards to you all. Kevin



(Sent in by Kevin Rasmussen) Kiwi-born poet, Tomos Robertson (aka Tom Foolery) produced [this beautiful video of The Great Realisation](#). He crafts us a vision for the future post-covid that is more attuned to our aspirations than the world we lived in pre-Lockdown.

“Tell me the one about the virus again, then I’ll go to bed”.

“But, my boy, you’re growing weary, sleepy thoughts about your head”.

“That one’s my favourite. Please, I promise, just once more”.

“Okay, snuggle down, my boy, but I know you all too well.

This story starts before then in a world I once would dwell”.

“It was a world of waste and wonder, of poverty and plenty,

Back before we understood why hindsight’s 2020

You see, the people came up with companies to trade across all lands

But they swelled and got much bigger than we ever could have planned

We always had our wants, but now, it got so quick

You could have anything you dreamed of, in a day and with a click

We noticed families had stopped talking, that’s not to say they never spoke

But the meaning must have melted and the work life balance broke

And the children’s eyes grew squarer and every toddler had a phone

They filtered out the imperfections, but amidst the noise, they felt alone.

And every day the skies grew thicker, ‘till you couldn’t see the stars,

So, we flew in planes to find them, while down below we filled our cars.

We drove around all day in circles, we’d forgotten how to run

We swopped the grass for tarmac, shrunk the parks ‘till there were none

We filled the sea with plastic because our waste was never capped

*Until, each day when you went fishing, you'd pull them out already wrapped
And while we drank and smoked and gambled, our leaders taught us why
It's best to not upset the lobbies, more convenient to die
But then in 2020, a new virus came our way,
The governments reacted and told us all to hide away
But while we were all hidden, amidst the fear and all the while,
The people dusted off their instincts, they remembered how to smile
They started clapping to say thank you and calling up their mums
And while the car keys gathered dust, they would look forward to their runs
And with the skies less full of voyagers, the earth began to breathe
And the beaches bore new wildlife that scuttled off into the seas
Some people started dancing, some were singing, some were baking
We'd grown so used to bad news, but some good news was in the making
And so when we found the cure and were allowed to go outside
We all preferred the world we found to the one we'd left behind
Old habits became extinct and they made way for the new
And every simple act of kindness was now given its due"
"But why did it take us so long to bring the people back together?"
"Well, sometimes you've got to get sick, my boy, before you start feeling better
Now, lie down and dream of tomorrow and all the things that we can do
And who knows, if you dream hard enough, maybe some of them will come true
We now call it The Great Realisation and yes, since then, there have been many
But that's the story of how it started and why hindsight's 2020*

Starts next Sunday 14th June ...



You are invited to the first local Crop Swap!
Faiawa Farm & Transition Towns are holding a regular Crop Swap for our local Bay of Islands & Whangaroa community and beyond. Join us on the second and fourth Sunday of each month.



More people are interested in growing their own food and eating healthy food and that is a great thing! Crop Swap is about sharing seeds, plants, healthy food, knowledge and wisdom and community. Let's ensure we all have access to fresh food and our rich heritage of growing and working with plants is preserved and passed on to future generations. Through this regular gathering of people, we hope to build community resilience and ensure we are well placed to thrive.

Two Sundays a month from 12:30 - 2pm Crop Swap be will held at the beautiful Faiawa Farm Wool Shed, where there is a large undercover main deck area perfect for community gatherings. At the very first gathering we will sit down together and discuss how we can make the Crop Swap work best for all of us and we will set up a group of coordinators. We will support others to start their own more local events, too.

At 2pm a Permaculture related talk, workshop or film screening will be held in the upstairs Wool Shed Club House or out in the garden. If you want to learn more about organic gardening, soil health, pruning, grafting, bio-dynamics, permaculture and much more you are encouraged to join in.

Asha 021 181 9919
Tammy 020 4110 4846

seeds, plants, fruit, vegetables, cuttings, pickles, preserves,
baked goods, clean planting pots, garden books,
magazines, jars, bottles, hand tools...

HOW IT WORKS...



Obituary (Sent in by Trish and Gijs Veling)

Our dear friend Sue, who many will know from our FNOG meetings, sadly died suddenly on 9 May.

Sue lived life to the full and was a woman of many talents. She loved drumming and we always enjoyed meeting up with her at the full moon drumming around the fire. Her passion for travelling took her to many countries over the years as well as enjoyable road trips in New Zealand. Trish has great memories of a road trip with Sue to the WOMAD festival last year.

Sue also enjoyed making healing herbal remedies from the many herbs she grew in her garden. Gardening was a calling and we have great memories of visits to each other's gardens. Sue always arrived with seeds and cuttings, one of her preserves as well as delicious scones. It was always a celebration when Sue came and much to talk about. She always left our place with seeds and cuttings and when her visits coincided with stirring the biodynamic preparations, there was a bucket or two which also went home for Sue to spray on her garden.

In our garden we have many gifts from Sue's garden, which we treasure, including the lavender cuttings which have grown into large shrubs. They are a constant reminder of our friendship. One of those gifts last year were the seeds for the Cherokee Trail of Tears - delicious dried beans. At the field day at Carol and Graeme's, in February, she mentioned she had no seeds to plant so Gijs was happy to say he could give some back to her from our summer crop. Our next crop will certainly be sown in her memory. There's something to be said for spreading the love around!!! And Sue did that so beautifully, leaving her presence felt by those who met her. The Garden of Eden will certainly be welcoming her in with open arms and of course gardening gloves!!



MISSION STATEMENT OF FAR NORTH ORGANICS & PRODUCERS

- To gather and seek information pertinent to the organic's 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

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