

**HOW THE NETWORK RELATES TO EXISTING INITIATIVES**

Many organisations and individuals are already involved with protection and restoration of New Zealand's biodiversity. For example, the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society, Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, the World Wide Fund for Nature, the New Zealand Botanical Society and regional botanical societies, the Coastal Dune Vegetation Network, Landcare groups, the New Zealand Ecological Restoration Network, territorial authorities, the Department of Conservation and private land owners have all contributed to the protection of New Zealand's plant life. The purpose of this network is not to replace or to compete with existing initiatives but to supplement and complement them.

Discussions have already been held with interested parties such as the New Zealand Department of Conservation. The intention is to set up the network as an incorporated group in its own right with close links with existing agencies, government and non-government, as well as private individuals. It is expected that there will be a subscription for network membership.

A cohesive and genuinely co-ordinated approach is the only way forward if we are to begin to reverse the decline in the world's wild plant diversity.

Dr Jane Smart, Plantlife UK

**WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN**

People are the key to this network. By signing up to the network you will have access to experts in plant conservation and the best available information about native plants in New Zealand. Network members will decide what the network will do and how it operates. Members will contribute to discussions on the focus of the network, on activities and linkages both national and international.

The New Zealand Plant Conservation Network will provide you with contact details for people working in plant conservation throughout New Zealand and Oceania. Membership will ensure that you keep up-to-date with information about native plant conservation, including lists of nationally and regionally threatened species, and nationally important plant conservation sites. You will be able to locate *ex-situ* sources of locally sourced plant material for use in ecological restoration or species recovery work. You will be able to contact expert plant growers throughout New Zealand and learn from them about current best practice for cultivation of native plants. Your knowledge and expertise in plant conservation will be useful to other members.

New Zealand, with its isolation from other lands, and latitudes ranging from the subtropical to the sub antarctic, has a unique and highly diverse vegetation.

P. Wardle 1991: *Vegetation of New Zealand*.

**New Zealand Plant Conservation Network**

*The vision of the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network is that no indigenous species of plant will become extinct nor be placed at risk of extinction as a result of human action or indifference, and that the rich, diverse and unique plant life of New Zealand will be recognised, cherished and restored.*



**THE MISSION**

To educate people about New Zealand's native plant life and to promote indigenous plant conservation in New Zealand and throughout Oceania. To collaborate to protect and restore New Zealand's indigenous plant life, their natural habitats and associated species. To disseminate information about the taxonomy, biology, ecology, and status of indigenous plant species and communities in New Zealand and to promote activities to protect them throughout their natural range.

**THE MEMBERSHIP**

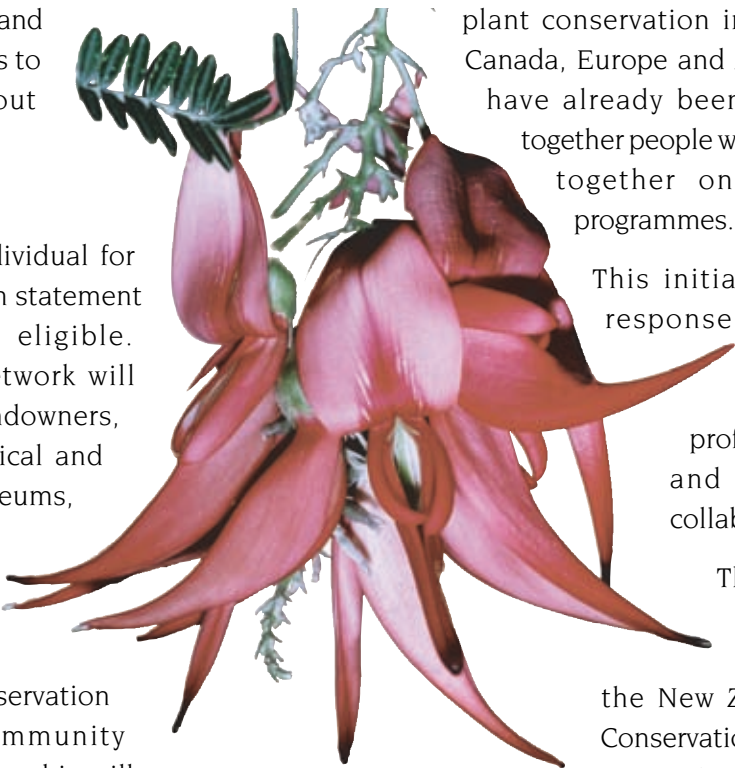
Any organisation or individual for whom the above mission statement is important will be eligible. Membership of the network will comprise botanists, landowners, landcare groups, botanical and zoological gardens, museums, schools, government agencies including territorial authorities, horticulturalists and tertiary institutions, conservation organisations and community groups. Details of membership will be held in a network directory. This wide range of expertise and resources will be used for plant conservation.

**BACKGROUND**

The proposal for a plant conservation network emerged from discussions between many individuals and groups involved in plant conservation in New Zealand. It was realised that no one agency or person can do everything to protect New Zealand's indigenous plant life from its many threats. Collaboration is now proving to be a powerful tool in plant conservation initiatives worldwide. In Canada, Europe and Australia plant networks have already been established to bring together people with a range of skills to work together on plant conservation programmes.

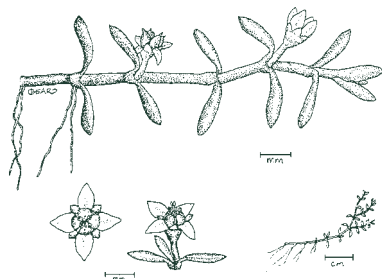
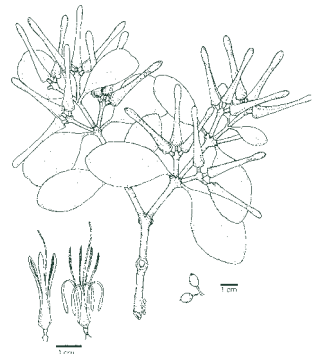
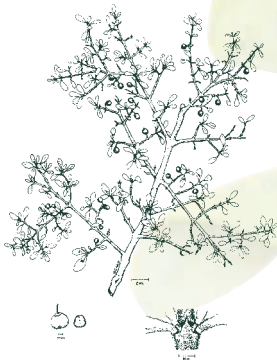
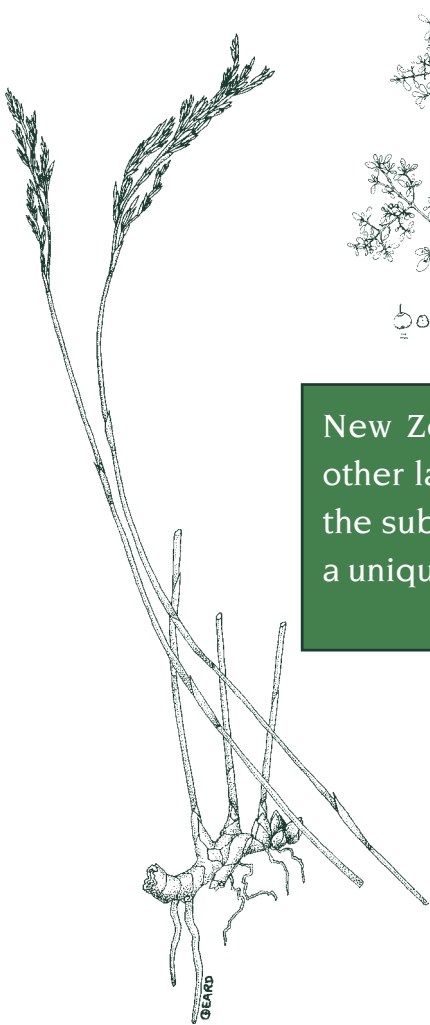
This initiative is New Zealand's response to what is happening in other parts of the world in looking for a higher profile for plant conservation and a more effective, collaborative approach.

The concept already has moral support of several organisations including the New Zealand Department of Conservation and the Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation. Regional plant networks in Wellington and Auckland are already making positive changes to the way people help each other to conserve native plant life.



New Zealand is as close as we will get to the opportunity to study life on another planet.

Jared Diamond 1990





In a time when the global community is increasingly recognising the importance and urgency of conserving plant diversity, the establishment of multi-disciplinary networks is recognised as an extremely important step towards mobilising, maximising and applying the resources necessary for plant conservation. New Zealand is internationally recognised for the unique diversity of its flora. The creation of its national plant conservation network is therefore both timely and an extremely important development.

Dr Peter Wyse Jackson  
Secretary General,  
Botanic Gardens Conservation International,  
March 2002

A New Zealand Plant Conservation Network will:

- improve plant conservation practice;
- increase efficiencies in achieving plant conservation outcomes and minimise overlaps in work;
- increase resources to focus on priorities.
- make more information freely available to those involved in plant conservation.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is a commitment by the nations of the world to conserve biological diversity, to use biological resources sustainably and to share equitably the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. New Zealand ratified the Convention in 1993; the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy was published in 2000 to take up the challenge to halt the decline of New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity. It states that for “*successful implementation of this strategy will require a co-ordinated effort across central and local government, working in collaboration with the private sector, the community and landowners and in partnership with iwi and hapu*”. The New Zealand Plant Conservation Network will provide a mechanism for that co-ordination and so contribute towards implementation of the strategy.

A Global Plant Conservation Strategy is also being developed by the Convention on Biodiversity. The ultimate objective is to halt the decline of plant diversity. The strategy sets global targets for plant

conservation to be achieved by 2010. It is intended that the strategy will facilitate harmony between existing initiatives aimed at plant conservation, identify gaps where new initiatives are required and to promote mobilisation of the necessary resources. The New Zealand Plant Conservation Network will contribute towards the successful implementation of a Global Plant Conservation Strategy.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANT CONSERVATION IN NEW ZEALAND

Plant diversity is a key component of nature's life-support systems. Most of New Zealand's indigenous plant species, the communities that they are part of and the animal communities that they support are endemic—they do not occur in the wild anywhere else in the world. Our responsibility is to protect these natural resources not only because of the ecosystem services that they deliver (such as soil conservation and oxygen production) or because of the many uses to which they can be put but most importantly because of their intrinsic right to exist.

New Zealand is world renowned for its flora and fauna and is regarded internationally as a global biodiversity “hot spot”. More than 80 percent of New Zealand's flora is endemic and much of this consists of uncommon and threatened species and unique plant communities.

The native plant life of New Zealand may be internationally important but it's continued survival is threatened. Among the most significant threats are land development (such as subdivision, wetland drainage and forest clearance), invasion of exotic species (both plants and animals) and global environmental changes (such as a changing climate). Plant conservation, in response to those threats, will halt and reverse the current decline of native plant life in New Zealand.

The endemic products of New Zealand...are perfect one compared with another; but they are now rapidly yielding before the advancing legions of plants and animals introduced from Europe.

Charles Darwin 1859: *On the Origin of Species*

## THE FOCUS FOR THE NETWORK

In 2002 the New Zealand Department of Conservation listed more than ?? indigenous vascular plant species at risk of extinction in the wild (not including taxa whose taxonomic status has not yet been determined accurately). In addition, a further ?? species were listed as in decline. Many native plant communities in New Zealand are also threatened, such as wetlands, coastal dunes and lowland forest. Other, non-vascular, plant species are also known to be at risk in the wild.

The protection and recovery of those threatened species, their associated plant and animal communities and endangered and representative plant communities will be the focus for the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

## WHAT THE NETWORK MAY DO

There are many ways in which the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network may achieve its vision:

### Education and advocacy

- Focus attention and raise awareness of the plight of New Zealand indigenous plant species and communities.
- Achieve greater involvement of plant growers, industry, zoos and landholders in plant conservation.
- Educate people about the native plant life of New Zealand (through publications, web site and meetings).

### Strategy, prioritisation and resources

- Provide an national body to co-ordinate plant conservation projects.
- Link to and work with existing agencies (especially councils, government agencies, botanical societies, botanical gardens, conservation groups, schools and universities).
- Establish and maintain regional networks throughout New Zealand.
- Hold regional meetings and workshops to achieve greater collaboration on plant conservation projects so avoiding duplication of effort.

By far the largest land area in Polynesia, New Zealand is sufficiently important and unique from a biological standpoint to be considered a hotspot in its own right. [It is] one of the few hotspots in a developed nation (and indeed the only hotspot that encompasses the entire land area of a developed nation). ...the prospects of saving what remains in this country are as good as in any of the planet's top-priority areas.

D. R. Given and R. A. Mittermeier 2000: New Zealand, in *Hotspots* edited by R.A. Mittermeier *et al.*

- Assist with development of a national list of important plant areas such as those supporting threatened species populations, threatened plant communities or those that are centres of plant diversity or plant endemism, species rich areas or areas representative of the New Zealand flora.
- Play a hands-on role in plant conservation. Manage conservation volunteer teams or accept contracts to implement species recovery plans or plant conservation management work.
- Co-ordinate the establishment of a secure *ex-situ* living collection of New Zealand threatened plant species.
- Gain sponsorship for plant conservation initiatives.

### Technical expertise

- Maintain a member's directory of people involved in plant conservation in New Zealand.
- Run plant conservation training programmes.
- Provide technical assistance to its members.
- Assist with the maintenance of a list of nationally threatened plant species and regional lists of uncommon species.
- Monitor plant trade activities in so far as they relate to national CITES obligations.

### Information

- Collate and disseminate information about plant conservation, activities, events and provide electronic communications to its members (perhaps through a regular newsletter and web site).
- Monitor and co-ordinate *ex-situ* collections of conservation-worthy plants.
- Maintain species lists for areas in each region.
- Maintain a bibliography of plant conservation.
- Prepare and disseminate plant conservation guidelines.
- Maintain a directory of plant conservation related research and document plant conservation initiatives that have not been published.