

Marlborough District Council Strategy for Ecosourcing Native Plants for South Marlborough

Introduction

This report includes:

- A description of the new ecosourcing zones and guidelines for ecosourcing native plants in South Marlborough.
- Plant species lists that display the zone and ecological district(s) for most South Marlborough native plant species.
- A strategy for Marlborough District Council to improve the availability of eco sourced plants for revegetation projects on both public and private land in South Marlborough.

Ecosourcing Zones for South Marlborough

There are only two ecosourcing zones in South Marlborough as the remaining areas of native vegetation in South Marlborough are very scattered and small. These are the Inland South Marlborough zone and the Lowland South Marlborough zone.

The Marlborough District Council, Department of Conservation and QE II National Trust support these zones.

These two zones include the following ecological districts:

Inland South Marlborough

Waihopai
Medway

Lowland/Coastal South Marlborough

Hillersden
Grassmere
Flaxbourne
Wither Hills
Blenheim
Kekerengu

These zones make broad ecological sense in terms of ecological regions and Land Environments of New Zealand. They largely follow the Ecological District and Region framework which makes them compatible with the Marlborough District Council's Significant Natural Area survey and the Department of Conservation's Protected Natural Areas Programme survey.

A map showing these zones is attached to this report.

Ecosourcing Guidelines for South Marlborough

Ecosourcing is particularly relevant in South Marlborough because for many species, particularly those that would have been present in lowland and coastal areas prior to human arrival, the remaining examples in the wild are now rare and under threat or, in some cases, locally extinct.

Plants within the same species can adapt to local conditions to become genetically separate (and sometimes physically distinctive) and are called 'provenances'. These local plants are therefore well adapted and are best used for propagation as they provide the best chance of survival and good growth.

Propagating from unknown plant material risks interbreeding and thus genetic contamination of local flora. This is likely to have already occurred for several commonly propagated native species planted in South Marlborough.

Therefore, the ecosourcing zones identified provide a broad base for the collection of native plant material for propagation. However, where feasible, seed should be collected from within a catchment or ecological district as close as possible to the specific site of a planting project and having regard to the range of habitats.

Generally, propagation from seed is preferable to cuttings to maintain wide genetic diversity. Cuttings are best used as a last resort option.

Where possible, local seed sources that can be secured, will be identified so as to provide insurance against further local extinctions. Examples of common native tree species now rare in the wild in South Marlborough include kahikatea, matai and lowland totara.

Plant Lists

The Department of Conservation has provided revegetation native plant species lists for South Marlborough's ecological districts. These have been reformatted to display the zone and ecological district(s) for most South Marlborough plant species.

A copy of these lists are attached to this report.

MDC Strategy for Ecosourcing in South Marlborough

1. Protection

- To support and encourage private landowners to protect of remaining areas of native vegetation in South Marlborough, particularly rare and endangered plants, so as to preserve seed sources.
- Protection will be achieved through DOC covenants, QE II National Trust covenants and Council's Landowner Assistance Programme. These support landowners to protect Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) on private land.

2. Revegetation projects

- Many SNAs and public reserves would benefit through new planting and/or underplanting to speed site recovery and increase bio diversity.
- Revegetation projects that are supported by Marlborough District Council will be with ecosourced plants.

3. Landscape Use

- Eco sourced plants have significant potential for use in landscape planting as they are ideally suited to local climate and growing conditions and therefore ensure good survival and growth provide they are sited correctly.
- Drought and/or frost tolerance are particularly important features that ecosourced plants can be selected for.
- Marlborough District Council will use Marlborough's endemic plants in landscape plantings to showcase the unique character and form of these native plants.
- The South Marlborough Native Planting Guide has been developed to provide information on landscape use of native plants.

4. Seed Collection

- The cost for the collection of seed is a major barrier to nurseries.
- Collection of seed from public reserves requires a special permit.
- A large number of private landowners have SNA and PNA sites that offer the potential for collecting seed or taking cuttings. Some of these landowners already co-operate with seed collection.
- There will be further consultation with other private landowners to identify additional seed collection sites in South Marlborough.
- Council staff may undertake seed collection for large scale revegetation projects or organise for this to be done under contract.
- Seed and cutting collection work must be with care to ensure there is no long term damage to the parent plants.
- In the longer term Council may encourage sites on private land with good access to be planted with suitable native species so as to provide seed and cutting material for propagation.

5. Plant Supply

- Currently the main demand for ecosourced plants is by MDC or DOC for revegetation projects as well as by QE II and for private revegetation projects.
- Council wants to encourage local nurseries to produce a diverse range of ecosourced plants suitable for revegetation and landscape use. This includes labelling to identify ecological district where seed or cuttings were collected.
- Council will support local nurseries in identifying possible sites for seed collection or taking cuttings through contacting private landowners to arrange access.

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