

Auckland Regional Council Technical Sheet G-1

LIST OF WATER TOLERANT PLANTS SUITABLE FOR ON-SITE WASTEWATER DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

GENERAL MATTERS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANTING A LAND DISPOSAL AREA:

Plants that are suitable for planting in moist conditions, such as those associated with wastewater land disposal fields need to be selected on the basis of both their tolerance for such moist conditions and for their potential for high level of growth/high transpiration of moisture in such conditions.

Standard lawn grass is a proven effective high transpiration plant species in such conditions, as are a large number of other plant species seen in typical domestic gardens.

Consideration needs to be given to effects of roots from plants and from trees in particular on wastewater distribution pipe networks/emitter lines in land application systems. Potential for root intrusion/disruption to the pipe system must be considered prior to selection and planting of a plant or tree species.

Advice on such matters for particular plant species can be obtained from garden centre specialists and landscaping consultants.

NATIVE PLANTS SUITABLE FOR MOIST CONDITIONS IN THE AUCKLAND REGION:

The following list covers native plant species are considered to be suitable for planting in moist conditions, such as those associated with wastewater disposal fields in Auckland situations. They are all tolerant or fond of moist conditions and all are native to the Auckland region. Much of this information has been adapted from one of the ARC Botanic Gardens advisory leaflets; "14 – New Zealand plants for wet places" and the list edited and reviewed by Dr. Rhys Gardner Consulting Botanist, Auckland War Memorial Museum (August 2004).

Grasses, ground covers, and other plants

***Astelia grandis* (swamp astelia)**

Large clump forming plant with bright green, flax-like foliage. Female plants produce upright panicles of orange berries in the centre of the plant. This endemic species will not tolerate eutrophic conditions and prefers peat soils.

***Blechnum novaezealandiae* (kiokio)**

Large, robust fern growing to 1 or even 2m, Hardy species that tolerates most conditions, but does best in well drained, shady areas.

Carex

There are many members of this genus which grow naturally in damp to wet areas. They all have quite fine drooping foliage and are vigorous in moist conditions. Most prefer very light shade. The following species have been identified for their suitability:

Carex dissita

Endemic species with dull green to reddish tufts often 0.5m tall (although this can vary). Tolerates a range of swampy habitats, but is also noted to grow on drier soils under forest cover.

Carex flagellifera

Endemic species with dense spreading reddish-brown tufts to 0.5m tall. Prefers damp soil and full sun, but is noted to thrive in a variety of habitats including boggy pasture.

Carex geminata

Robust and vigorous endemic species that grows to 1.5m tall. Thrives in a range of wet habitats. Suitable for a larger area.

Carex lesssoniana

Robust and vigorous endemic species that grows to 1.5m tall. Similar to *C.geminata* in that the species is spreading and suitable for a larger wet area.

***Carex secta* (purei, makura)**

Endemic species that exhibits tall spreading tussocks. Has been noted to grow to 3m tall, widespread in swampy areas. Useful in the creation of bird habitat.

Carex virgata

Endemic species that forms dense, light green tussocks up to 1m tall. Thrives in a variety of habitats including swamps, drain margins, seepages and wet pastures. Useful in the creation of bird habitat.

***Cortaderia fulvida* (toetoe)**

Branching from the base and forming a clump to 4m high. Long strap-shaped leaves with red-orange coloured veins, flower heads cream yellow. New shoots exhibit pale waxy cover on lower parts (unlike pampas grass) Prefers good drainage and semi-shade. Will struggle to compete if dried out in summer.

***Cyperus ustulatus* (toetoe upoko-tangata, giant umbrella sedge)**

Vigorous leafy sedge growing to 1m in open damp places. Tolerates immersion in standing water within a range of habitats from seepages to wetlands.

***Dicksonia squarrosa* (wheki, tree fern)**

Tree fern up to 7m tall that exhibits tolerance of wet open ground, and floods. Found to shelter and accumulate with other native plants. The base of the fern attracts biodiversity. Useful application to streambank and seepage habitats.

***Elatostema rugosum* (parataniwha)**

Herbaceous plant up to 0.5m tall that spreads by rhizomes. Bronze coloured foliage with serrated edge. Grows on moist sites in light to heavy shade. Intolerant of dry habitats.

Hypolepis dicksonioides

Large fern that prefers fertile moist, but well-drained ground, grows vigorously and spores into planted areas with abundance. Does however, die back during winter.

***Phormium tenax* (harakeke, flax)**

Fast growing clump-forming flax with large stiff leaves, to 3m. Full exposure and sun. Moist to wet conditions. Does not have deep or wide roots. Easily propagated from split fans or grown from seed. Attracts birds, especially Tui.

Trees and shrubs

Consideration needs to be given to the effects of roots land application on wastewater distribution pipe networks. This problem can be more significant for large tree species.

***Carpodetus serratus* (putaputaweta, marbleleaf)**

Lowland forest tree up to 7m tall. Large bunches of cream coloured flowers appear in spring followed by black berries.

Coprosma areolata

Species that grows to 4m tall. Low tolerance to drought, with medium to high fertility.

***Coprosma robusta* (karamu, shining karamu)**

Shrubs or small trees growing to 3m+, with glossy green leaves. Masses of orange-red fruit in autumn are attractive to birds. Hardy plant.

***Coprosma tenuicaulis* (swamp coprosma)**

Endemic species that grows to 3m tall. Leaves pale green with slender branches. Will tolerate a range of swampy to boggy habitats including standing water.

***Cordyline australis* (ti kouka, cabbage tree)**

Palm-like in appearance with large heads of linear leaves and panicles of scented flowers. Sun to semi-shade. Prefers damp to moist soil. Grows eventually to 12m+ height.

***Dacrycarpus dacrydioides* (kahikatea, white pine)**

Tree that grows to 40m. Moderately growing species, which prefers wetland and boggy environments. Application of this species must consider the possible impact of its root systems on the wastewater disposal field.

***Geniostoma rupestre* (hangehange)**

Common forest shrub with pale green glossy foliage, growing to 2-3m. Tiny flowers give off strong scent in spring. Looks best in sunny position where it retains a bushy habit, and prefers well-drained soil.

***Hebe stricta* (koromiko)**

Shrub or small tree growing to 2-5m in height. Natural forms have white to bluish flowers. Plant in full sun. Tolerates exposure. (NB Many cultivars and hybrids are available commercially, but these are all unsuitable for use near existing natural vegetation.)

***Laurelia novae-zelandiae* (pukatea)**

Large upright tree (to 30m) with attractive bright green foliage and distinctive whitish bark. Fast growing and able to handle a wide variety of soils. It will tolerate periodic flooding, breathing roots develop in water logged soils. Can be grown from seed. Tolerant of some sun and frost. Not tolerant of wind.

***Leptospermum scoparium* (manuka)**

Shrub or small tree growing to 4m+ in height. Ubiquitous shrub varying in form throughout New Zealand. Ideal to provide shelter for other plants as it is quick growing and hardy. Requires full sun and. Hardy and tolerant of difficult conditions, including waterlogging and drought.

***Meliccytus ramiflorus* (mahoe)**

A fast growing yet long lived tree to 7m height. Prefers well drained fertile soils. Tolerates some frost, wind and sun Birds are attracted to the blue berries.

***Pennantia corymbosa* (kaikomako)**

Slow growing species that will reach 12m in moist, fertile sites. Useful species application in bank stabilisation or wetland habitats.

***Plagianthus betulinus* (ribbonwood)**

Fast growing species to 15m. Similar application to that of *Pennantia corymbosa*.

***Rhopalostylis sapida* (nikau)**

New Zealand's only native palm, with red berries attractive to birds. Requires light shade, plenty of moisture and protection from wind when young. Grows well in areas of permanent dampness.

***Syzygium maire* (maire tawake)**

Attractive and moderately growing wetland tree to 15m with bronze foliage, large bunches of reddish fruit and distinctive whitish bark. Requires a sheltered sunny position. Tolerates some frost.

***Vitex lucens* (puriri)**

Fast growing to 20m in fertile, open but sheltered conditions. Will struggle with poor drainage during adolescence.

