



# Feed the Whānau māra at Taita College

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Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro nōnā te ngāhere  
Ko te manu e kai ana i te matauranga nōnā te ao

Papawhakaritorito Trust has been supporting the establishment of an urban farm at a high school in Lower Hutt. Lani Rotzler Purewa has been working alongside students of the Ahi Kā class, who have been working with the whenua over the last years. The kaiako and taura there have been working during lesson time to remove rubbish and invasive species, and are aiding in revitalising Te Māra a Tāne. They have been wanting to establish māra kai to learn



whārangi tahi



cultivation skills and raise seedlings for crops as well as native trees for the ngāhere, and we are supporting them in making this happening them in making this happen.



Planting native grasses along recently cleared area, that had previously been concealed by 2 meters tall invasive blackberry.

## UPLIFTING THE MAURI

The site is located at the back of the school, which backs onto a large section of native bush, nestled under the hills in Te Awakairangi. Students have noticed much native wildlife return such as the kōkopu, and many self seeded rākau Māori are growing in places that were once taken over by blackberry. When standing amongst the ngāhere, you feel that the site is coming alive, and being cared for, and mauri being replenished. The māra will thrive when the wider ecosystem which it is surrounded by is thriving. Uplifting mauri of the entire site will bring co-benefits to the māra and ngāhere.

## PREPARING THE SITE FOR THE NEW MĀRA

We have begun to prep the site for growing, through suppressing the grass and building soil.

We have been trying to find as many free inputs as possible to begin layering and building up organic material such as coffee chaff, manure, wood chips and leaf mulch. We used old billboard material as tarps to suppress the grass until spring time. This has been a long tedious process, as removing staples from the tarps is a time consuming task. It took us several attempts to properly secure the tarps in the wind and weather, and to really ensure that all the grass is being killed off, without gaps in between.



Potting up self seeded Kahikatea and Tōtara for relocation.





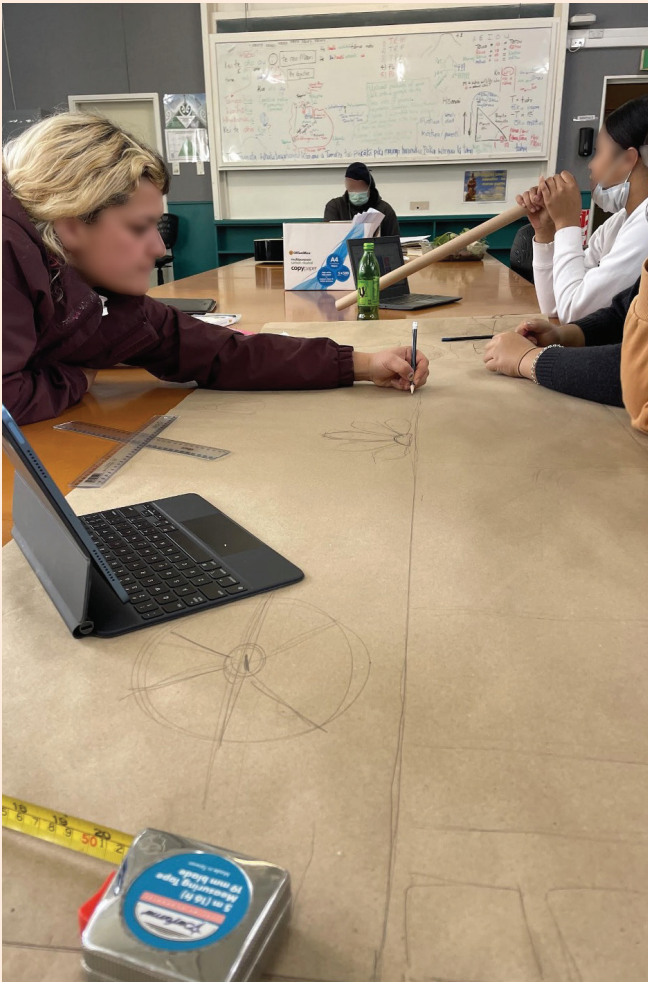
Lani and Tina in Paengawhāhā, laying mulch and tarps onsite to suppress weeds

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On the rows that we planted right away, we used cardboard to suppress the grass, as it will break down underneath the manure, wood chips and compost we layered on top.

The seedlings we planted in April were a koha from Papawhakaritorito farm, and some were raised with the support of the growers of the Remakery in Waiwhetu. We are currently growing kale, parsley, coriander, celery, cabbage, broccoli, beetroot, onions (red and brown), and we have directly sown broad beans amongst them in June. We planted these in spontaneous wild guilds, with as much plant diversity as possible within one square metre. This will ensure there are a diverse number of plant exudates to feed moroiti (microbes). Broad beans will add nitrogen to the soil which is an easy way to give some goodness to Hine-ahu-one and our tipu.



Planning and imagining the layout of our māra

## BUILDING A SHARED VISION FOR THE MĀRA

Some of our other work together in the last Matariki year has included finding a shared vision for the layout of the garden. The taurira and principal made it clear that there was a wish for a design to beautify the back field. We had several planning sessions and wānanga to decide on a design that made sense for the space, the things we want to grow and to create an accessible space. We decided on a shape that resembled the tail feather of the Pīwaiwaka. This manu is also on the school crest, and is a symbol often used by the kura. We also chose this imagery because Pīwaiwaka often came to visit us as we worked in the māra, especially once we got our mulch delivered.

Another major task last year has been to clear up the stream that runs right next to the māra. Taurira pulled out the rubbish and we transplanted kōwhitiwhiti (watercress) from another site into the clean stream. Once fully established, this site should produce more kōwhitiwhiti than we could wish for!

We were lucky to have a local arborist friend drop off loads of wood chips to us. We used this to care for the many fruit trees across the school site; apples, pears, feijoas. We added a good amount of wood chips to their base and are slowly getting around to giving them all a prune.

## MATARIKI AHUNGA NUI

As Matariki rose again in this new year, we knew we wanted to celebrate all we had done and all we have achieved so far. We laid down a hāngi, and gave kōrero about Ngā Umu Kohukohu Whetu, the steam that rises to the stars. It was important to do this together to reflect and share a meal. Matariki me ōna tamaiki tell the story of the cycles of our taiao and our kai. It was important to begin to connect the work that we do to restore our waiti, ngā tupuanuku me ngā tupuarangi to the work that our tipuna have done for many years before us.

We were lucky to receive happy home raised meat from a whānau homestead, and the corn and kumara were also home grown. All the herbs and greens used in the stuffing were grown on site. This felt like a good place to start, and we look forward to laying down a hāngi with only our home grown kai next year.





On our way to mulch ngā rākau whai hua

A central part of our work in spending time at this kura has been to strengthen relationships and build trust as we continue in this work together and as our vision for the māra grows. The school principal has been generous in supporting this project through some initial infrastructure, so we are looking forward to receiving our tunnel house, compost bins soon as well as some berries and fruit trees in the near future. From conversations as a collective, it seems we are all keen to support the opportunities to soon grow enough food to feed the whānau.

The Ahi Kā class is already a space where the matauranga of our tupuna is being explored,

utilised and passed onto the rangatahi. This māra kai will contribute to this through discussions of maramataka, ngā tohu o te taiao, sharing purakau and matauranga through growing within the Hua Parakore framework.

This māra is supported by Papawhakaritorito in collective efforts with Para Kore, the students of Ahi Kā, their Kaiako, the school principal, the collective of growers of Feed the Whānau (FTW) and the contributions of Tina Walker Fergusson. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

This summary sheet was prepared by Lani Rotzler Purewa of Papawhakaritorito Trust, 2022.





We are grateful and acknowledge the many collaborations that are in place to support this project.

