



Freedom Fruit Gardens - A Living Art Project

An artist's initiative will see an under-utilised reserve in Otara transformed into an edible orchard, the fruits of which will be readily available for the local community to harvest and consume. This will be the first of many future instalments of Auckland based artist A.D.Schierning's *Freedom Fruit Gardens* project.

Schierning's project aims to increase accessibility to the simple pleasure of harvesting and eating fruit straight from the tree by establishing edible gardens throughout New Zealand. As she explains, 'each of my projects are informed by my personal life. *Freedom Fruit Gardens* seeks to provide a practical solution to the difficulties of feeding a family on a tight budget.'

The inaugural planting of a *Freedom Fruit* garden will occur on Friday 25 June at Preston Road Reserve, East Otara, Auckland. The day of planting will be celebrated with an official opening event which everyone involved is looking forward to says Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts Public Programmes Coordinator Renée Tanner; 'with performances by the Kapa Haka groups of both Rongomai Primary and Te Tuhi and an accompanying hangi, this promises to be a very special day for all.'

This will be the first of many future installments of *Freedom Fruit Gardens* throughout New Zealand, with plans already underway in both Wellington and Christchurch. Schierning chooses each site for planting by using the Deprivation Index, a statistical scale which uses census information that ranks population blocks throughout New Zealand according to their financial deprivation. Schierning then maps out areas with the most condensed instances of financial deprivation according to this scale and looks for suitable and under-utilised parkland within its

radius, before putting forward a proposal to the local council and community bodies to plant an orchard within the area.

The site for the Preston Road Reserve orchard was also chosen by Schiarning because it borders with Rongomai Primary School. Schiarning involved the students of Rongomai who elected the orchard's fruit trees; feijoa, plum, peach, orange, mandarin, pear, banana and kiwifruit. The planting and maintenance will be undertaken by the students and families of Rongomai Primary as well as local residents.

Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts has supported A.D.Schiarning's project since its conception in 2007 as part of the Land Wars series, a major exhibition organised by former Te Tuhi Curator Emma Bugden. As a mark of respect to the origin of the project, A.D.Schiarning has chosen a site on the centre's grounds to plant a small lemon tree grove which will serve to connect the centre to the larger *Freedom Fruit Gardens* project at Preston Road Reserve. At 1.30 on Saturday 24th April, Te Tuhi will host a traditional Maori blessing lead by Taini Drummond, representing local Iwi, Nga Tai, followed by the opening of the Centres April - May Exhibition programme at 2pm.

A.D.Schiarning and Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts are grateful for the ongoing support from Waimea Nurseries, Rongomai Primary School Principal Tina Voordouw and students, The Otara Community Board, Vincent Perry, Chris Beard and the Parks team at Manukau City Council and Landscape Designer, Robert Sly.



PRESS CONTACT:

More detailed information is available on this project and other exhibitions and public programmes at Te Tuhi. For further information, interview enquiries or to obtain images for reproduction, please contact Renée Tanner at Te Tuhi:

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