

Carolyn Place gully planting

I have cleared and planted the alluvial banks down by the Mangakotukutuku Stream on two sides of the spur that comes out from the end of Carolyn Place. Both areas consist of loose, sandy material out by the streambank. Permanent seeps from the spur feed into pools of standing water and soft mud along the landward edges of the banks. The clearing of the western side began about 5 years ago, and the clearing of the northeastern side began a couple of years ago. I have primarily planted flaxes, sourced from wherever I could find them for free (this usually means digging up giant clumps from a garden somewhere). The large light-green *Phormium tenax* (mainly on the western side) clearly do the best, and I would like to eventually plant the entire area in these, but digging, splitting and transporting them down into the gully is a lot of hard work. The cookianums (along the edge of the stream on the northeastern side) are doing well, too. I have planted a few kowhai and putaputaweta “specimen trees” on both sides out in the sandy material; they are all doing very well. Along the seep line in the muddier material I have planted mainly cabbage trees and kikes, and I have also planted a dense line of cabbage trees along a natural drainage channel on the northeastern side. (Cabbage trees grow like weeds.) Black mamaku also do extremely well along the seep line and in the standing water. The city was kind enough to give me a couple of hundred astelias last year (surplus to requirements) and they are all densely planted along drainage channels coming down the northeastern side of the spur. These channels convey seepage year-round, and are quite mysterious. In places they disappear underground, and they are cool, moist, dark and lined with filmy ferns. The only frog I have ever seen down here (a green and gold bell frog) was in one of these channels. Anyway, the astelias are flourishing, but still a bit hard to see from Sandford Park. The biggest surprise is the six or so kotukutuku I have planted. I did not know where they would like to live, so I put all of them in different aspects and soils, and they are all thriving. The possums do not seem to have found them yet. I spend a lot of time on weed control – hand pulling and roundup, leaving the debris in place for mulch. I have given up on wandering jew, which I just roll up every now and then. It prevents seeds from striking, but I also suspect it does a good job holding the streambank together. On that note: have a look how deep the streambed is on the western side – 12 years ago that was about 20 cm deep, now it is incised a couple of metres. The hydrology is very flashy and the whole area goes under water with just a bit of rain – which is no problem for any of the plants, but it causes a lot of erosion. I reckon maybe 10% of the western alluvial bank area has been eroded away in the last 10 years, and in one place it is getting eroded back to the fast-land. Since the alluvium is being undercut, I cannot imagine any real way of controlling this, but you will note a couple of big walnut trees that I have left standing, in case they are helping. Finally, I have planted tiny nikaus everywhere, hidden in the shade – they are coming along nicely.



Carolyn Place gully planting – view planting on northeast side of spur from Sandford Park; view planting on western side of spur from steps leading up to Bruce Ave.

