



# COASTLINE

## AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2021

### NEW FESTIVAL IN 2021

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Our first Bountiful Backyards Festival weekend will take place 9 & 10 October. This is a sister festival to our Annual Heritage Harvest Festival. You'll be able to learn to grow produce to harvest for eating fresh or to store. You can then showcase your bounty at the Heritage Harvest Festival 6 months later.

Festival workshops will include, beginning a vegetable garden, composting, companion planting, keeping hens, bees and planting an orchard or forest garden. You will be able to graft apple trees and prick out a set of baby vege plants both of which you can take home.

There will be garden and food forest tours to showcase the range of backyards you can choose from and for inspiration. The Aparima College Hall will be full of businesses and individuals selling plants and products you need to make your backyard more bountiful.

Let us know soon if you would like to have a stall at this new two day festival. We are taking bookings now. Then in September the tours and workshops will be up on line for you to book.

Be sure to put the dates in your calendar now – Saturday 9 & Sunday 10 October 2021.

### DATES TO DIARY:

Tuesday 9th August	Committee Meeting: 7pm at the Centre, all welcome.
Saturday 9th October Sunday 10th October	Bountiful Backyards Festival Weekend

## TIME TO GET BUSY

Isn't it exciting - Spring is just around the corner! (Though I've grown up thinking August is Spring. It's lambing time so must be Spring!) Our snow drops are out and I see daffodils at the neighbours!

It's certainly time for garden planning. Nick has some words of wisdom for you to the right and check out his Worm Farming article on page 7. He makes it all quite simple and with the worms being available from the Riverton Centre, it's easy for more of us to get started with this.

On page 4, Robyn has succinctly outlined what is required when pruning various types of berries. Print it out and pin it to your garden shed wall for quick and easy future reference.

The new Bountiful Backyards Festival is a must attend, especially for beginners. Keep checking out the website for updates about what's going to be on offer. Remember the SCES is about 'Inspiration and Action'; a critical combination for achieving results.

You can talk with Environment Centre staff about supplying any excess spray-free produce to the Centre for selling.

Ongoing challenges for the Society are funding and staffing. They go hand-in-hand as you'll see in our page 6 Committee article. Our volunteers fulfill such important roles within the SCES team.

Nick is beginning a new regular slot about the Society's Strategic Plan. You'll see there's so much going on, thanks to our very busy team of dedicated good people. Thank you to each and every one of you.

**Wendy Joy**  
**Coastline Co-ordinator**

The South Coast Environment Society Incorporated (SCES or the Society) is a NZ registered Charitable Trust (Registration Number CC41561).

The Society vision is of a sustainable, resilient community of good leaders, resources, systems and examples available to assist and support people to adopt sustainable lifestyles and care for and about our environment.

The Riverton Environment Centre is a project of the Society. Volunteers open the Centre for the public 40 hours a week. The displays, information and resources are designed to be inspiring and enabling, incorporating a blend of traditional ways and new concepts to give people more earth-friendly options in their daily lives.

## VALUING VOLUNTEERS OF ALL AGES

We are enjoying having lots of young people aged between 5 and 18 coming in to volunteer; Pete, Ahi, Ciara, Kohan, Mio, Connor, all coming in weekly for a couple of hours.

For the older ones it is great to learn some new transferable skills and gain retail experience, they are then able to ask us for a reference for future employment opportunities. For the younger ones who come in with a parent, it is a lot of fun in a new environment.

We have new adult volunteers too; Lizzy coming in on Saturday afternoons, and Lori coming in on Friday mornings joining our wonderful volunteer team. Plus Vanya, who is working behind the scenes to catch us up with stocking the shelves, especially managing the herbs and spices.

Also Sheena, who introduces herself on page 6, has joined us project managing our Longwood Loop.

Our volunteers come from as far afield as Lumsden, Mataura, Omaui, Ohai, Pahia and Orepuke. Support is provided by way of a discount on food purchases and a contribution towards travel costs. Some volunteer weekly, fortnightly or monthly or on a casual, as required, basis. Over time they build up lots of knowledge, valuable both when volunteering and personally.

There is a real buzz when 2-3 volunteers are working together, sharing and chatting. If you can spare some time, do come and join in; new volunteers are always welcome.

A Big Thank You to all our volunteers, longer term people with all your valuable knowledge and new people still in the learning phase. You make up a great team helping to make our Centre a friendly and vibrant place to be!

**Robyn Guyton - Centre and Project Manager,  
Riverton Environment Centre**



## EARLY SPRING GARDENING WITH NICK

With the winter solstice passed and the days lengthening, gardeners look ahead to summer, but we know winter always has little 'surprises' for us, so be careful when sowing tender seeds - even sunny window sills can get pretty cold if it's frosty out!

If you do plan on getting some summer crops started (peppers and tomatoes perhaps), ensure their protection, and be ready to throw frost cloth or a towel over them at short notice! Using a heat pad to provide bottom heat will definitely get them off to a roaring start.

Peas and broad beans are still great for sowing in the ground now - or use toilet rolls or paper pots so they can be easily transplanted without stress. Even one of spring's (or summer's) wintry blasts won't hold them back. Other cool-season crops like radishes, lettuces and of course hardy greens like mizuna,

mibuna and pak choi will also cope, providing you have been feeding your soil (see our pg 7 worm farming article for some ideas on this). You can also sow some carrots in a sheltered spot.

Now's the time to 'chit' early potatoes - put them in a cool, light place (where they won't freeze) until they sprout. Then pop them in the ground (or on the ground), covered with mulch (hay, straw, pine needles all work)... keep an eye out for the little green shoots peeking out - you will need to watch the weather, as frost will kill off those tender signs of life.

Dedicated potato aficionados start this process as early as July, so they can dig up fresh new potatoes really early! Yours should be ready in a couple of months if you plant the right varieties.

**Nick**

## TE REO MĀORI GARDENING

Kōanga: Spring | Hua: Produce | Mahinga kai: Food growing / food gathering | Pūwairākau: Compost | Noke: Worm

## LONGWOOD LOOP & EV UPDATE

The eDelivery 3 electric van has finally arrived in Riverton. A few of us have driven it around the block and enjoyed the experience; comfortable seats and so quiet. Being white it just asks for some designs and artwork to go with some donors logos: Community Trust South, Riverton Childcare and our own SCES. So send in your artwork / designs ideas for this neat van that will re-weave our Southland communities back together through direct trading of locally produced food.

Speaking of direct trading, we had a hurdle to jump through relating to SDC and MPI regulations. It was unclear as to whether or not an online farmers market is direct trading. If not everyone would have needed to register with MPI and pay a fee to trade. However after a lot of discussions the MPI has stated that as long as it is fresh produce bought on line and distributed via our van, as a courier service, then there is no need for growers to register. If there is processing involved e.g. making cheese or jam then those producers do need to register with MPI.

This month we will kit out the van with appropriate shelving and equipment thanks to some Lottery community funding. We will also drive the van around the Loop a couple of times to have town meetings to make sure as many people as possible know about the project, and to seek more producers, customers and volunteers to manage each towns trading posts. Thanks to volunteer Joany who is doing a ring around to let people know directly about the progress of our Longwood Loop project.

The trading loop will be opened the first week in September so suppliers of Western Southland, big or small, email us your details now including a photo to represent your spot in this online market! Then the last week in August you can start listing your produce that will be available for sale each week.

For the first year, as trade builds up, we will need voluntary drivers but eventually with 10% of all sales going to the Loop's management, we hope to be able to employ drivers in the future. The cost of the electricity used will be less than \$5 for each 150km loop.

A huge thankyou to the 125 people who supported us in our pledge me campaign to raise the balance and get us over the line! A huge thank you also to Community Trust South who kept their funding available for us when we missed out 2 years in a row on the national EECA funding that we had hoped for, to pay the balance.



## CITRUS



There are some gorgeous lemons on my tree right now. This is puzzling: the lemon tree ought to be dead by now; it's late winter and every other lemon I've tried to grow expires over the cold season and I'm left with a framework of twigs, not a trace of vibrantly-coloured citrus! Seems I've accidentally done something right!

I have learned, over time, not to re-locate my citrus bushes, no matter how carefully it's done; they don't like it and die in response.

The three citrus I have now are in the big tunnel house and that's where they will stay, especially if they keep up this surprising habit of living. I've an orange tree, alive, bought by accident (I

was sure it was a lemon), a Tahitian lime, small but not-dead, and a Meyer lemon, thriving and fruitful.

I was very proactive with regard the winter this time around, draping all three in net-curtains as soon as anyone mentioned winter, and they stayed under there till now, when I've judged there will be no more cold-snaps. This could be a fatal judgement, we shall see; past experience indicates it will be fatal, but you have to have some excitement in your life.

I water the citrus regularly and feed them with worm-rum and seaweed tea. They certainly seem to like that. I'm quite cock-a-hoop about my success with these citrus trees, to be honest and am planning to buy some other types to add to my collection; perhaps a grapefruit and a Lemonade, whatever that might be (I've seen them at the garden centres). I'll keep you informed with any new developments.

**Robert**

## AXOLOTYL

What exactly is an axolotl, I'm asked moments after I announce that I've bought 3 of them. It's tricky to answer; easier to say, "Mexican walking-fish. You know".

But usually, no light of understanding comes on in the eyes of the poor souls I'm sharing the news with. I myself am not entirely sure what axolotyls are, despite having studied them through the glass sides of their tank, fed them daily (blood-worms, mince, fish), siphoned their water regularly (they're messy feeders) and watched them do...well, nothing much really.



They have distinctive feathery-gills and large, broad heads; they look like the Luck Dragon from *The Never-ending Story*; they gulp their food with the same vigour the Giant Cod takes in anything that swims in front of them, and they lurk

about on the bottom of their tank like Snapping Turtles; lethargic and menacing.

They're cute though, especially when young; their faces appear to be smiling, so wide is their mouth, and their gills wave like marine-fan-worms in feeding-mode.

In the wild, they are found only in two Mexican lakes, both of which are now critically toxified from human activity. Numbers have fallen to critical levels and their future as a wild creature is bleak.

The pet-industry has been their saviour, sort-of, in that there are large numbers of them living in the glass-tanks of people around the world, but only the albino or chocolate-brown varieties; the original colours are not favoured by humans and are therefore bred-out of the creature, for their own good. It's a sad story, really and one that makes owning them a poignant experience.

**Robert**

## HOW TO PRUNE BERRY BUSHES



It is time to pay attention to your berry bushes.

Blackcurrants fruit on new wood so cut out the oldest gangliest branches at the base every year (once the plant has become established).

Loganberries and boysenberries, like raspberries, fruit on last year's wood. Take out the older vines and leave a nice selection of the fresh supple ones.

Red currants and gooseberries fruit on old wood so treat them somewhat like an apple tree. A trunk is good to have, especially for gooseberries plants so you can easily weed and mulch underneath them. Ensure there are some nicely spaced branches so that sun can get in and it is easier and safer to pick the fruit without getting spiked.

Remember to keep the gooseberry and currant cuttings to stick them upright in a patch of rich well drained soil. You will have lots of baby fruit next spring to expand your patch, give away or sell.

**Robyn**

## SCES STRATEGIC PLANNING BY NICK

The South Coast Environment Society is an organisation operating within a diverse and dynamic society. As a result of these changing times and community needs we adjust our focus over time as we strive to fulfil our vision. We have a Strategic Plan, which we revisit in depth every 5 years as a Society. This is a process guided by our Committee but contributed to by our staff, volunteers, members, stakeholders and the general public.

We review our Strategic Plan yearly before each Annual General Meeting to ensure we are on target with our aims and objectives and know where to concentrate our energy during the year ahead. Our Strategic Plan is organised into Systems, Facilities and Projects to reflect the varied nature of our activities and where they fit into the big picture.

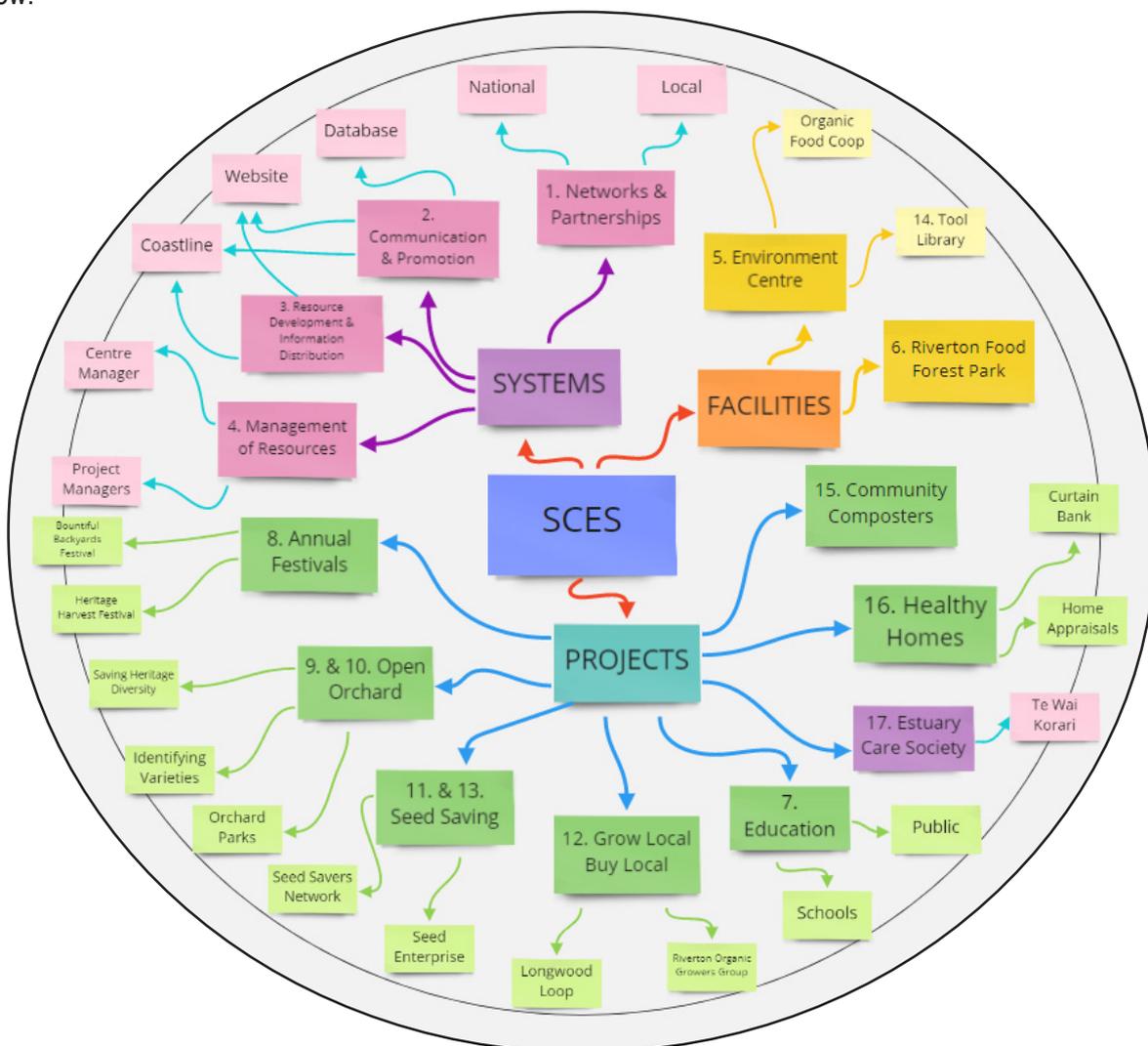
The **Systems** are: Networks & Partnerships, Communication & Promotion, Management of Resources and Resource development & Information Distribution.

Our **Facilities** are: Riverton Environment Centre and the Community Food Forest Park.

Our **Projects** are: Environmental Education (public and schools), Annual Festivals (including the Heritage Harvest Festival, Open Orchards, Southland Seed Savers Network, and Grow Local - Buy Local (including the Longwood Loop).

Some **Potential Projects** we would love to move forward on when we have the capacity include: Southland Seed Enterprise, Tool Library, Community Composting and Healthy Homes (including Home Performance Advisory Service).

In each issue of Coastline we will take a closer look at an aspect of the Strategic Plan - if there is something you are especially interested in, please get in touch. We love to collaborate with individuals and groups, so if you can see potential synergy, we want to know!



## OUR COMMITTEE

### Rollercoaster Funding Challenges!!

In 2002 the Society was excited to receive \$45,000 of newly approved government funding for NZ Environment Centres. Subsequently, the 6 original Centres received \$30,000 per annum. Gradually, as additional Centres opened our annual funding reduced, eventually to only \$12,000 p.a. It picked up again when Centres were required to have a 'shop front' open to the public for at least 20 hours a week, resulting in some Centres becoming ineligible.

In 2016 an independent analyst was commissioned to visit all 15 NZ Environment Centres to undertake an in depth review of their services. Then in consultation with the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) a new set of funding criteria was established, including a requirement to be open at least 30 hours a week, being well known and easily found, operating more than just 3 projects, etc. Consequently our Riverton Environment Centre came out in the top tier for funding entitlement and our share increased back up to \$45,000 a year; some Centres stayed on \$30,000 and others dropped to \$15,000 or to \$0.

Earlier this year we received the delightful news that the MfE had increased operational funding for Environment Centres six-fold, to \$1.8m a year with the NZ Environment Centres collective, the EHA, to be responsible for the funding management and distribution.

Before long we were disappointed to learn that changes made to the funding criteria did not work in our favour. We did not meet the 'Established Centre' criteria due to receiving inadequate locally sourced funding and our low

number of paid staff hours. Consequently our share of the substantially increased government funding was only a 60% increase. Most other Centres (generally city-based with large commercial sponsors) increased by 200 to 400%.

The EHA now recognises the revised funding criteria needs reviewing to apply more equitably across all types of NZ Centres and expects this to happen prior to the 2023 funding round. In the meantime it is disappointing. We are severely understaffed resulting in us just skimming the surface of our many very important projects.

Our Society is always on the lookout for sponsors and other funding sources, for our various projects. Being rurally based makes this more challenging. Centres located within cities have greater sponsorship opportunities and with a greater population they fare better when applying for funds e.g. comparing a city of 1 million to a rural seaside town of 1,500.

We believe the EHA funding criteria needs to be broadened, to appreciate the geographical diversity of NZ, and the number and effectiveness of projects operated by each Centre. Robyn Guyton is now on the Funding Steering Committee so will be in a position to have greater input into the review of the funding criteria.

Our Society is very grateful for the tremendous voluntary input from Robyn and all the volunteer team members. They are ensuring our Riverton Centre remains one of the best Environment Centres in NZ!

**Russell, SCES Treasurer**

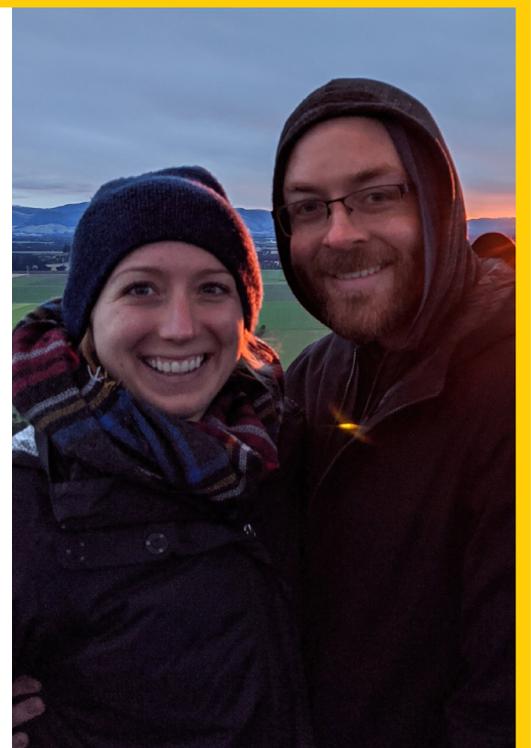
## OUR PEOPLE

*We Welcome New Volunteer Sheena who is helping as our voluntary Project Manager for the Longwood Loop. Sheena is a qualified, very experienced project manager who works internationally. She is working alongside Anna & Robyn to ensure no stone is left unturned when it comes to getting the Longwood Loop project up and running. Thank you Sheena!*

Hi, my name is Sheena Conant. My husband Josh and I moved down to Riverton at the end of 2020. We chose to move here in part because we fell in love with the old Riverton hospital chapel (which we are in the process of renovating) and in part because we loved the street art, the museums and shops, and of course the Environment Centre, when we visited.

So far we're really enjoying being here - it is a much slower pace than anywhere we've lived, which is exactly what we were hoping for. We're looking forward to trying our hand at growing some of our own food this year, which will be a first for us. I've been helping the Longwood Loop with project management and website work since last December, and looking forward to selling my own produce through the Loop if everything goes well!

**Sheena**



## WORM FARMING WITH NICK

The impact on soil science, of Charles Darwin's famous work 'The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms, with Observations of their Habits', was off the charts - Darwin proved through experimentation that worms had preferential food tastes, responded to light and vibrations and even displayed intelligence, although he did note that some worms were "careless or slovenly"... (See [Sciencelearn.org.nz](http://Sciencelearn.org.nz) for more).

New Zealand has hundreds of earthworm species, many found nowhere else in the world. If you have a worm farm, you most likely *Eisenia fetida*, AKA tiger worms, AKA red wigglers. These voracious little characters are known to be able to eat their own weight in food every day and can rapidly turn food wastes into super rich 'vermicast' which contains a wealth of beneficial nutrients and other compounds, such as 'bacterial slimes'... might not sound great, but rest assured, plants love it.

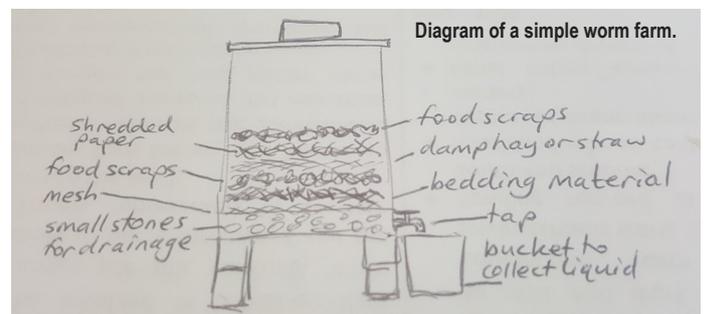
A worm farm can be made from any type of container as long as it is large enough to hold enough worms to take care of your organic household waste. One kilo of worms will get through approx 500gms per day. Containers can be stackable boxes, plastic rubbish bins, premade systems like the 'Can o' Worms' or an old bathtub, able to be drained, as liquid may build up.

Put a layer of small rocks in the bottom of the container with a layer of weed matting on top, to let the liquid drain and be collected – it's a very nutrient-rich liquid fertiliser when diluted to the colour of weak tea. If drainage isn't good, the worms will drown and the worm farm will stink!

Next you need some bedding for the worms to live in, like a layer of damp compost, straw or scrunched up newspaper. Rotted aged manure also works well (fresh will get too hot). Place the worms on top of the bedding, leave them to settle in for a week, then start to feed them.

### Good worm foods include:

- Fruit and vege scraps
- Dead or dying plant material
- Coffee grounds
- Crushed egg shells
- Animal manure (but not from cats or dogs)
- Shredded Newspaper and cardboard



A monthly sprinkling of lime provides worms with calcium and grit to help them digest food (they have no teeth!).

Worms like it to be dark and moist so keep your worm farm covered with a layer of wet newspaper or cardboard, a piece of plastic, old carpet or underfelt. You will also need a lid to keep out vermin and too much rain. Your worm farm needs to get some shade in summer and some sun in winter: worms can die if too hot and will slow down when cold.

After a few months you should be able to start collecting vermicast. Simply start feeding in one spot and leave the rest uncovered - the worms will move to where the food is. After a week or so you can dig out the side they have vacated (there will still be some worms there, but they won't mind being relocated to the garden). The vermicast can be mixed in with soil or compost to make a rich potting mix, or can just be spread around plants in the garden. It is especially good for establishing seedlings. A sprinkle around your indoor plants will pep them up no end.

If you have chickens or ducks they will absolutely love a handful of worms every now and then!

Worm farms can become home to slaters, fruit flies and small white 'pot worms' - these guys are fine, they all play a part in turning food waste into rich soil. A worm farm is an ecosystem after all.

Worm farming is an excellent way to convert so-called 'wastes' into amazing plant food, so consider giving it a go... Worms can be obtained from the Environment Centre - we have millions, and they would love to make your garden their home!



Left - right: The bucket we collect scraps in at the Centre; voracious worms eating paper towels; the Centre's worm farm bathtub, home to millions of happy tiger worms.

Scan this QR Code to watch a video of Nick working with the Riverton Environment Centre's worm farm or visiting the Centre on YouTube.

# WE NEED YOU!

**Volunteer Vacancies:** Suitable for adults of all ages, high school students, an adult with a primary aged helper.

Want to get work experience, meet new people and/or learn new skills? Come and join the friendly team at the Environment Centre. Flexible hours, and can be once a week, fortnightly or monthly.

You can help behind the scenes bagging up etc. and / or staffing the front counter. We provide training and support and, after you have been with us for a while, we can provide a reference for a job.

So don't be stuck at home with nothing to do, we need you!

Text Robyn 0273683831 or phone or call into the Centre during opening hours.

## IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR PLANTS,

*we have got lots!*

A selection of herbs, vegetables, trees and shrubs awaits you at the Environment Centre.

**PRICED TO SELL FROM \$2 TO \$10.**

Come in and have a look!



CLARIDGES TEAS ARE NO LONGER AVAILABLE IN TEA BAGS.



Their same lovely range of fresh loose leaf teas is now available in home compostable packaging.

Price ranges from \$6.50 to \$8.10

Please send in your Readers Patch contributions by the first Monday of each month to:

**coastline@sces.org.nz**

## Support the South Coast Environment Society

Community support enables the South Coast Environment Society to continue to operate the Riverton Environment Centre and manage several successful projects throughout Southland.

If you like what we do, and want to help us to do more, please consider; donating money, volunteering time, becoming a member, and / or sponsoring a project. [www.sces.org.nz/about/donate](http://www.sces.org.nz/about/donate)

**Ph 03 234 8717**

## VISIT THE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

The South Coast Environment Centre is situated on the main street of Riverton on the Southern Scenic Route.

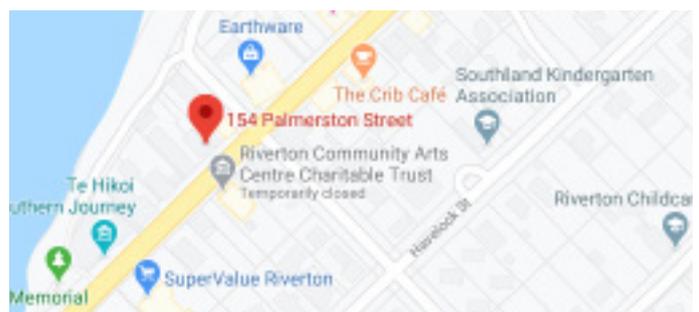
**Phone:** 03 234 8717, **Email:** [office@sces.org.nz](mailto:office@sces.org.nz)

### Opening hours are:

Monday - Friday: 10:00am - 4:30pm

Saturday: 10:30am - 4:30pm

Sunday: 1:30pm - 4:30pm



[www.sces.org.nz](http://www.sces.org.nz)



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