



COASTLINE

AUTUMN 2026

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Welcome Autumn - and Celebrate the Harvest!

Autumn is on its way; apple trees are laden, garlic has been tucked into its garden beds, and the scents of cloves and cinnamon are filling warm kitchens across Southland.

We know all this means that our 17th Heritage Harvest Festival will soon be here. Our team has been busy putting together a brilliant festival workshop line-up, with festival-favourites returning, as well as some exciting first-time workshops.

We feel very lucky to have a wonderful group of tutors coming along to this year's festival to share their skills, and some wonderful growers, bakers and craftspeople bringing their creations to the festival market.

We hope you will join us at this year's festival - there will be something for everyone and good cheer all round. Our Harvest Festival is one of the key fundraisers for our society, and this year more than ever, we need your support. So, come along, learn something new, meet some great people, enjoy some carrot cake, and you will be supporting our projects all the while!



DATES TO DIARY:

28 & 29 March, Sat & Sun	17th Heritage Harvest Festival
Weekly until mid-April	Forest Garden Tours
3rd Tuesday of each month	SCES committee meeting

Editorial

I have been really lucky over the last few weeks to get back into some Southland schools to support their composting (read more on pg 4). It is such a privilege to be able to do this and is clearly valued by schools, however funding it can be a real challenge! Thankfully Wastenet Southland and Enviroschools have provided the funds and connections to make it work. There is certainly demand for our education team out there!

At this time of year our Heritage Harvest Festival is a significant focus of our Society's activities - there's a lot to read about it in this issue, especially the excellent workshop lineup on pgs 6 & 7.

Nick and Robert have some autumn garden tidying on their hands on pg 3 and on pg 4 there's some updates on the Heritage Orchard project and Longwood Loop, as well as our recent work on composting with Southland Enviroschools - great community collaboration.

On pg 9 you can read about Riverton Environment Centre - which turns 30 this year - a fantastic achievement!

You can find out about Trish's 'threat analysis' for growing strawberries on pg 10 and on pg 11 Dylan profiles Last Light Lodge who sell their excellent preserves at Riverton Environment Centre and on the Longwood Loop - as well as all the other work they are flat out with at this time of year. We also get an update from Biochar Network New Zealand and a podcats recommendation.

Riverton Community Garden is the focus of the last page and young local writer Peat gets the last word in.

There's certainly been a lot going on and as usual we are very proud to share it with you. Thank you all for your support!



Nick, Guest Editor

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

The Society's vision is a connected and flourishing Southland where there are leaders, resources, systems and examples available to assist and support people and communities to adopt resilient lifestyles and care for and about their environment.

The Riverton Environment Centre, 154 Palmerston Street, is open 10am - 4.30pm 6 days, and 1.30pm - 4.30pm Sundays.

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.

Warming The Centre

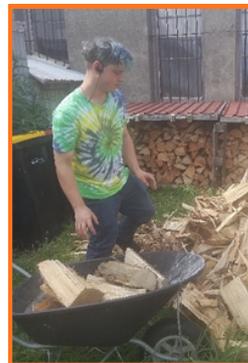
Riverton Environment Centre is a community hub; a gathering space and meeting point for many. Being an old building it can of course be chilly in the winter (as well as autumn, spring and often summer) so keeping the fire roaring and the space snug is extremely important.

Fortunately we have some good local fellows who contribute to keeping our visitors warm.

Steve is key firewood wrangler. He makes sure that the wood is ordered and that it is managed well en route to the hearth. Together with his good buddy Tim they built several new sheds for storing the wood and keeping it dry.



Steve and Tim: sticking together.



Andrew excels at stacking wood! He is a regular volunteer at the Centre and will often pop by to ask if there is anything that needs doing - he enjoys helping to make a satisfying wood stack.

Andrew: logging on.

Trevor is the guy we get the wood from. His yard is just around the corner and offers a great mix of Oregon and gum. We are stoked that Trevor gives us a discounted price. You can get hold of Trevor on 027 511 2293.

So next time you are at the Centre and the fire is going, take a moment to think of all the people who have put in the work to keep us all warm.

Thanks guys!



The glowing heart of the Centre.

Thank you to our supporters!

Community Trust South
TE POU ARATAKI POUNAMU O MURIHIKU

Environment Hubs Aotearoa

SOUTHLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri

MURIHIKU KAI COLLECTIVE

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wastenet southland

GARDENING

Knowing When To Cut Your Losses

Well, it's happened - our first frost. If you ask around Riverton "have you had a frost yet?" the answer may well be "no", unless you live in the very specific, sheltered, flat area around my house, in which case the answer will be "sigh... yes".

Although our pumpkins and zucchinis now look thoroughly ruined, they still have some pickable fruit, so we will make the most of these, before getting on with things - no use crying over frosted cucurbits, as they say (at my house).

It's possible that we could have kept these plants alive for longer through judicious use of frost cloth, but in fact we are quite ready to start using the garden space for other things anyway, so it's just encouraged us to get into gear with planting our winter crops. Sometimes it is really worth putting in that extra effort to protect things and extend their production, but sometimes it's best just to cut your losses and move on.

The pumpkin garden (which hosted a thoroughly vibrant legume-rich cover crop all last winter) will be planted out with well-mulched purple sprouting broccoli seedlings which we will look forward to eating in the 'hungry gap' of September and October when there is little else of interest available.

Of course summer and autumn can provide a lot of food to get us through the winter, but there is that point where the production isn't worth the effort - that's when to get a bit ruthless and pull out the remaining plants so your winter and spring crops can get established before it gets too cold. It seems harsh, but you'll be thankful you did it!

Nick



Pumpkins and zucchinis: munted.

Feeling The Heat

When I heard the doyen of forest-garden green-houses was coming to speak at the harvest festival in March, I became a little anxious. There are not so many forest-gardens in the world just yet and those that are don't always have a green-house operating with the same principles found outside of the glass or plastic - it's not an easy thing to manage, naturalness under cover. I felt sure Jerome Osentowski, given his great interest and the nearness of my place to the festival venue, might sign up for a tour. I went for a look through newly-alerted eyes, at what he might see if he was in fact to visit.

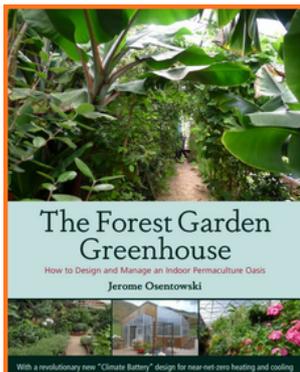
My first impression upon walking into the big tunnel house I'd filled with climbing beans, banana plants, kiwifruit vines, tamarillo and brugmansia was, yikes! It seemed overly chaotic, to put it mildly. I retired subdued to the house for a restorative cup of coffee, then returned, hoping the impression had adjusted during my break. It had. Now, the scene looked manageable, if I applied myself over the 4 weeks I had before he arrived; I could straighten-up the bamboo canes that supported the beans, trim the spent leaves off the bananas, prune the leggy runners off the kiwifruit and add a dozen more tamarillo plants I was growing in pots ready for next season.



Once those things were done, the tunnel looked very much better and I could relax, knowing that if it didn't look perfect on the day, I could blame the weather, or just not care, claiming to myself that all forest-gardens look beautiful to the forest-gardener and try the aesthetic sense of any visitor, so the forest-tunnel is no different in that respect. I'll welcome Jerome in and feel proud that at worst, I've got such a rare space and who knows, he might think it's pretty good - I'll have to wait and see. Come March 28/29th and I'll know for sure.

Robert

Growing Tropicals in the Mountains



Jerome Osentowski is an American permaculture designer, educator, and founder of the Central Rocky Mountain Permaculture Institute in Basalt, Colorado. For more than three decades he has pioneered techniques for growing food in cold, high-altitude climates. At CRMPI he has developed a one-acre indoor and outdoor forest garden and a series of passive-solar greenhouses that can produce Mediterranean and tropical crops in the Rocky Mountains.

Jerome teaches courses, internships, and the world's longest-running Permaculture Design Course, sharing practical skills in ecological design, soil building, and regenerative food systems with students from around the world.

We are extremely fortunate to have Jerome joining us at this year's Harvest Festival. At the time of printing we are not exactly sure what his plans are while he is in Riverton, but we will be sure to pick his brains as much as we can while he's here!

Jerome's fascinating book - available at Invercargill Public Library!

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Our 17th Harvest Festival is happening this month! There is so much to get involved with!

- Book into a workshop to learn a new skill
- Bring along the best of your home harvest to display in the festival hall
- Bring a plate of food to share to the Friday night pot-luck feast
- Book in to the Saturday Harvest Dinner
- Bring your apples in to make juice in the apple press
- Enjoy a cup of tea and sweet treat at the Harvest Cafe
- Explore the festival hall, and support small local growers, craftspeople and bakers in the grower's market

Remember, SCES members receive a discount on all workshop tickets - individual members receive 10%, and 'Supporter Members' receive 50% off.



Other Harvest Festival Events

Harvest Pot-luck Feast

Friday, 27th March, 7pm

Bring a plate of food to share and ring in the 17th Harvest Festival with good company!

Harvest Dinner

Saturday, 28th March, 7pm (ticketed)

Join us for a meal celebrating our local growers. Enjoy dinner, dessert and great conversation by candlelight. During the evening, the 'Champion of the Harvest' competition will take place.

Forest Garden Tours

Saturday, 28th March, (ticketed)

Sunday, 29th March, (ticketed)

Join Robert for a walk through the Guyton's 30 year old forest garden.

Community Forest Garden Jetty Street, behind the Fire Station.

Take yourself for a walk through the 15 year old community forest garden.

Riverton/Aparima Community Orchard Castle Street, subtle entrance on the first left after the house on the corner. Self-explore this orchard which contains fruit tree varieties brought to the area by some of Riverton/Aparima's early European settlers.

Celebrate the best of your harvest!

Every year, our community harvest displays are a favourite of festival-goers. Growers, young and old, from across the region (sometimes even further afield!) bring along the best of the year's harvest to display. Every season celebrates different fruits and vegetables - the perfect growing conditions for pears one year, brings a beautiful array of pears on the festival table in March. Some years, a full-size pear is a near miracle! What will this season bring? Come along to see all that can be grown by home gardeners in Southland.

Entries can be brought in to the festival hall from 10am - 5pm on Saturday 28th March. We have had some pretty special donations from great wee businesses and crafters coming in for our festival prizes - and this year we are feeling very lucky to have been gifted \$3000 worth of fruit trees from Waimea Nurseries.

If you have a garden (or a foraging spot) of your own, be sure to bring along the best of your harvest to display in the festival hall, and you could be taking some of these prizes home!



The best bunch



A beautiful bloom



Your harvest basket



Prized vegetables and fruits



Famous fruit pies

Bring your entries down to the festival hall between 10am and 3pm on Saturday 28th March - collect your entry and prizes on Sunday from 2pm

Would you like to volunteer at this year's Harvest Festival? Email scseseducation@gmail.com to find out more!

Champion Of The Harvest Competition



Are you this year's 'Champion of the Harvest'?

Those vying to be 'The Champion of the Harvest' gather at the Saturday night Harvest Dinner. Between dinner and dessert, the competitors complete a series of challenges, designed to test each of the skills needed to be an expert grower, preserver, and harvester. Are you a master of apple peeling? Do you have callouses from shoulder-season gardening? Do you know your marjoram from your oregano? Maybe this is your year!

To enter this year's competition, bring along to the Harvest Dinner a basket filled with some of the 'fruits' of your harvest. Compete to win a beautiful wooden chopping board, to carry the title of 2026 Champion of the Harvest, and to take care of the hand-turned apple trophy.

Recipe: Harvest Cafe's Carrot Cake

CARROT CAKE WITH CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

From A Vegetable Cookbook by Digby Law

Preheat oven to 160°C (320°F). Grease and flour cake tin (9 in square or round).

Mix 1½ cups of olive oil and 2 cups cane sugar. Beat 4 eggs, add 1 teaspoon of vanilla, and then add to olive oil and sugar mixture. In a large bowl, mix 2 cups flour, 1½ teaspoons cinnamon and 1 teaspoon of salt with 3 cups of grated carrot and one cup of chopped walnuts. Mix wet into dry. Sprinkle baking soda at the last minute. Pour into greased cake tin and bake for 55 minutes or until cooked.

To make the icing, mix 1 container of cream cheese, ¾ cup icing sugar, 1 tsp vanilla, and ½ cup melted butter, until smooth. Ice cake when cool. Makes a lovely afternoon tea cake, or a brilliant special occasion dessert.



Support our festival

Our festival is one of our key fundraisers for our non-profit society. By getting involved with our festival, volunteering, donating prizes, booking workshops, and attending events, you are supporting all of our projects. Thank you!



Robert helps Dave from Riverton Rural Transport unload a fabulous selection of fruit trees kindly donated by Waimea Nurseries for the Harvest Festival.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Become a 'Supporter' Member

We have a new membership category for those who can contribute more than the standard membership donation.

It's a way that you can help SCES maintain a strong base, from which we can grow our projects and deliver our services within our community.

≡ \$200 per year (\$16.60 per month) ≡

Annual Supporter Perks include:

- 50% off SCES workshops
- A Forest Garden Tour for up to 6 people
- Advance fruit tree and festival tickets ordering
- Your name listed on our website as a key supporter (optional)

Please go to www.sces.org.nz/membership to learn more and to become a Supporter Member!

Harvest Festival Programme

Saturday 28th March 2026

Time	Room, Type	Workshop	Tutor
Session 1 9:30 - 11:00am	A Cooking	Preserving Your Harvest	Imogen Coxhead
	B Craft	Flower Arranging	Michele Horwood
	C Garden	Berry Fruit for the Home Garden	Jason Ross
	D - Kids	Make Your Own Skincare Cream	Sandra Wundsam
Session 2 11:30 - 1:00pm	A Cooking	Making Sourdough Bread & Pizza	Evita Shen
	B Craft	Willow Weaving	Carla de Boer
	C Garden	Soil Fertility for the Home Garden	Dylan Graves
	D - Kids	Beeswax Candle Making	Uli Sirch
Session 3 1:45 - 3:15pm	A Cooking	Cooking with Acorn Flour	Sandra Wundsam
	B Craft	Introduction to Beekeeping	Southland Bee Society
	C Garden	Growing on the Borders	Robert Guyton
	D - Kids	Harvest Art	Andrea Sexton
Session 4 3:45 - 5:15pm	A Cooking	Apple Baking	The Feast Team
	B Craft	Paper Making - 2 x 45 minute workshops	Lesla Hepburn
	C Garden	Foraging Walk	Dylan Graves
	D - Kids	Natural Jewellery Making	Sophia Leon de la Barra

Thank you to our festival supporters!



Harvest Festival Programme: Sunday 29th March

Sunday 29th March 2026

Time	Type	Workshop	Tutor
Session 1 9:30 - 11:00am	A Cooking	Making Chinese Dumplings	Charley Wang
	B Craft	Raranga Harakeke	Des Cooper
	C Garden	The Story of the Orchard Project	Robyn Guyton
	D - Kids	Family Forest Garden Walk (community forest garden)	Robert Guyton
Session 2 11:30 - 1:00pm	A Cooking	Cooking with Wild Weeds	Evita Shen
	B Craft	Raranga Harakeke	Des Cooper
	C Garden	Natural Fruit Tree Pruning & Training	Jason Ross
	D - Kids	Nature Explorers	Nick Kiddey
Session 3 1:45 - 3:15pm	A Cooking	Making Kombucha	Evita Shen
	B Craft	Felting	Imogen Coxhead
	C Garden	Biodiversity by the Square	Nick Kiddey
	D - Kids	Kids' Games/Kēmu for Kids	Sophia Leon de la Barra
Session 4 3:45 - 5:15pm	A Cooking	Kimchi with Evita	Evita Shen
	B Craft	Introduction to Beekeeping	Southland Bee Society
	C Garden	Seed Saving	Nick Kiddey

Thank you to our festival supporters!



waimaea
NURSERIES

And the many individuals who offer their time to help!



PROJECTS

Open Orchard Project Update

Our funding application for 'apple DNA testing / settler research / Southland heritage orchard trail', was, unfortunately, declined by Lotteries Environment and Heritage: 'We regret to inform you that your request was unsuccessful because it did not align as closely with the Fund as other requests in the funding round'. I imagined that asking for \$22,000 out of a pool of several million they allocate each year was most likely to be successful, but being a national fund I guess there is a lot of big project competition.

So after all the anticipation and excitement that I wrote about in the last Coastline, it is not to be...YET! I will find another way; maybe a sponsorship for the DNA testing part and we can do the settler research with volunteers.

On the plus side it is a super bumper apple harvest year, most trees are producing. I have been out and about capturing new varieties I have never seen in the Heritage Parks. Some I have identified myself including the Duchess of Oldenburg and Red Astrachan - very old ones from Russia. I will have these and other new ones on display at the Festival, along with as many other named ones as usual.

I am going up to Dunedin this coming weekend to meet with Aaron from Otago University and see the fruit that they have had DNA tested last year, so when I can send samples, I won't double up with his selection already tested from the Otago Tree Crops heritage orchard. I also might be able to name more of our unknown varieties at the same time. Please visit your local orchard park and harvest fruit to share with you community. Make sure they are ripe (falling to the ground and easy to lift off the branch) and only take what you can hold in your hands. There will be fruit coming ripe each week over the next three months.

Email openorchard@sces.org.nz for the Heritage Park nearest you. After the Harvest Festival we can bring the apple press up to your community to make apple juice if you are overloaded with fruit.

Robyn



Duchess of Oldenburg (striped) and Red Astrachan

Longwood Loop Update

We are starting to do trial runs of a second loop of inland southland in the next few weeks. Waimatuku to Woodlands to Matura, Limehills and through Drummond and every town near or on that route. Thank you to Rebecca who is the inland Loop co-ordinator and her team of early adopters. It will be exciting to see if we can replicate the success of our Western Southland Loop.

If you would like to be a grower/producer or customer please email us thelongwoodloop@gmail.com and we will pass you email on to Rebecca.

We also need bases for 'trading posts' around the new loop - a shelf in a garage, a veranda etc. that can be available one afternoon a week for drop-offs and pick ups. Also a team or two of van drivers with a helper to do the pick up and deliveries. Waimatuku will be the new base for the van as it is where the two loops link up. So ideally the drivers live nearby, e.g. Wallacetown. Our team will be training and supporting the new loop until they are running smoothly and we will share the electric van.

**THE
LONGWOOD
LOOP**

Compost!

Our Completely Compost project has been winding down recently as the funding from Wastenet comes to an end, but we have had the pleasure of a great collaboration with Wastenet and EnviroSchools that's enabled us to support six Southland EnviroSchools with their food waste minimisation mahi. It's been awesome to share this knowledge with so many enthusiastic young people and to see some of the great environmental things happening in our schools.



Above: Ali (Wastenet), Nick (SCES) and Josh (EnviroSchools) with the Enviro Team from Heddon Bush School and (right) at Sacred Heart School (with Jane from EnviroSchools).

Centre News - 30 years...

Summer is always a busy time for us with visitors from far and wide. It is always nice to share our lovely Centre with them and we get lots of praise. This year I was proud to say, 'and we will have been open for 30 years in June!' Then I think about how long that has been, opening every day, mainly with volunteers for well over 10,000 days. What a huge effort for a little township at the bottom of New Zealand with population just over 1500!

Be part of the future and keep the Centre open and vibrant. Come and join in. Two hours a week, a fortnight, or a month, or occasionally when you have time, is all it takes to lighten the load. If you can't help yourself, you may know someone who has time and would enjoy either serving visitors or helping out behind the scenes. We give fuel support for those who live outside the Riverton area. Thanks for spreading the word!

We have lots of new products too and looking for more ideas. If you know of a product that will be a good fit for us let us know and we will see if we can stock it.

Keep the first weekend in June free, we will be having a 30th birthday event.



From left: Rodger Sutton, Southland District Mayor Frano Cardno, Wendy McMahon, Jacqui Anderson, Robyn Guyton and Ruth Mathieson opening Riverton Environment Centre in June 1996.

Riverton Organic Food Co-op News

It is lovely to see all the fresh fruit and veges available now, many grown locally. Our new chiller is proving its worth keeping things cool and fresh.

We are going to have a packing working bee to catch up as we have had way more buyers buying things than volunteers over the summer. Come along and help out: Friday 4.30pm. Email organicfood@sces.org.nz if you want to volunteer or to RSVP for the working bee (we will have nibbles).

The new Food-Co-op Trust will be shifting to Kiwi bank soon, and other than that we will be operating as usual.

To become a food co-op volunteer, email: organicfood@sces.org.nz



Robyn

Fabulous Zero Waste Products at Riverton Environment Centre

We love supporting people to reduce waste at home and with these new products it is easier than ever!

For washing dishes, we have wire soap shakers which look like they'll last a lifetime - all you need to do is pop in a block of soap (like Ecostore's Dish Soap Bar, in lemon or grapefruit), swish it in some hot water and you'll have sparkling clean dishes.



If you struggle to chop garlic, the super easy to use garlic press will do the trick (just push down and roll around) and for the best tasting, microplastic-free tea, a one-cup tea strainer will have your loose leaf tea brewed to perfection.



For the keen bakers out there, reusable muffin liners (in medium and large) and baking mats will replace the single-use waxed paper that is otherwise destined for the landfill.

And to celebrate reducing your waste, why not try the new Bennetto chocolate range - so delicious you'll definitely be back for more!

Growing strawberries : a nerdy gardener's threat assessment.

Autumn is the best time for planting strawberries, but after 8 years of trying, I still can't grow a good crop (sad face). Not wanting to give up I thought I would investigate who or what could be the missing link to my strawberry triumph. First I had to learn about what strawberries needed to thrive and then work out how my practices contradicted their needs.

Temperature needs:

The ideal temperature for growing strawberries is surprisingly narrow. It doesn't mean they won't crop, it just means the crop might not be as big, fruit might be smaller or knobbly.

- Grow well between 10-13 °C (night) and 18-23 °C (day)
- Flower between 15 to 20 °C
- Dormant at -6 °C
- Die at -12 °C

Sunlight risks:

Lots of sunlight is essential for plants to flower and produce good quality fruit. The required amount of sunlight can depend on if the cultivar is a Short Day (<12 hours sunlight) or Day Neutral (>12 hours sunlight) variety.

- Shorter days decrease plant metabolism and growth.
- Too much shade can cause plants to be spindly, have small leaves, be poorly pollinated and have poor fruit quality.

Climate and weather risks:

Strawberries enjoy climatic stability as they grow and like humidity to be around 70%.

- Fruiting is affected when late frosts are common.
- Too much rain can cause rotting fruit, waterlogged soils and flood damage.
- Sudden temperature drops can stress the plants and cause flowering to stop.
- Not enough rainfall and crops could require irrigation.
- Too hot and dry and the plant can't cool its leaves.
- Hail can damage plants and fruit.
- Too much wind can cause dehydration or damage from debris.
- Not enough wind and pollination may suffer and pests and diseases accumulate.
- Humidity can affect how much water is lost or accumulated by the plant.

Soil and nutrition risks:

Strawberries like nutrient-rich soil but access to the nutrients is dependent upon soil temperature, water temperature, soil pH and soil biology.

- May not be able to get sufficient nutrients from sandy soil types.
- Extreme temperatures increase or decrease uptake of water soluble nutrients.
- Land management practices may destroy microorganism habitat.
- Insufficient organic matter may make plants vulnerable to extreme pH levels.
- Microorganisms can go dormant in cold weather therefore produce fewer nutrients.
- Plants in the same garden bed (>5 years) can create unhealthy soil conditions.
- Strawberries can be allelopathic if left in the soil for too many seasons.

Other threats to the plant and fruit:

- Runners remove energy away from the mother plant, reducing fruit production.
- Older plants are less likely to produce good quality fruit (>4 years).
- Planting crowns in Spring can result in a small first year crop.
- Aggressive plants (i.e. weeds) can easily overtake a strawberry bed.
- Beetles like grass grubs, chafer beetles, and bronze beetles can eat young foliage.
- Strawberry root weevil can cause stunted growth.
- Slaters, slugs and millipedes target fruit to avoid dehydrating.
- Mice, dogs, possum, rabbits, chickens and other wild birds will delight in the berries.

I'm hoping this will help me grow a good crop this year, and I hope it helps you too!

Trish,
Gardens for Life



LOCALS

Local Shop Supplier Highlight - Last Light Lodge

Based in Tuatapere, Craig and Violaine at Last Light Lodge have a genuine Garden to Plate restaurant where most of the vegetables and fruit come from the garden on site. The Lodge mainly caters to Humpridge Track walkers who stay the night before and sometimes the night after their Great Walk, but anyone can book a room or meal during the Summer hiking season.

The gardens boast a variety of beds, usually planted with a mix of plants and with flowers spread throughout. The fruit trees have various herbs and smaller plants underneath. There is a sizable hothouse for tomatoes, basil, strawberries and other support species. Large beds of potatoes, carrots, and other root vegetables supply the calories for meals and quality meat is sourced to create gourmet dinners. The important concept in this way of providing sustenance is that there is very little wastage - minimal plastic wrapping, food waste goes to the chickens and ducks, and transport consists of a wheelbarrow! Gluts of fruit are turned into jams and relishes which are available year round in the SCES shop and through the Longwood Loop.



Craig says: "Preserving for me is about trying to use up everything that you have grown and prevent spoilage and wastage, Courgette and tomato chutney is a good way to use up excess, tree fall, etc at this time of year."

Recipe

1kg courgettes, 1kg tomatoes, 500gms onions, 800gms apples, 300g sultanas or raisins, 2tbs mustard seeds, 1 tbs allspice (can substitute with mixed spice or pickling spice), 400gms sugar, 500ml of vinegar, a couple of chillis.

Chop all vegetables and place in a large saucepan with the remaining ingredients, simmer until thick, can be thickened with cornflour and water if necessary, pack into hot sterilised jars and lids, wait one month to mature in jars before opening.

Local Educators

Evita offered a Taiwanese Bao Bun making workshop to celebrate the Lunar New Year (of the Horse). This is a traditional street food found during annual celebrations and features slow cooked pork, unique flavoured sauce, and some veges, in a soft fluffy bread bun. Yummy to eat while continuing to walk in the streets.

Evita's kimchi workshop at the Harvest Festival is sure to sell out, so make your booking NOW, especially if you have been successful in your planting of wombok as per last issue's recommendation! Fermented foods are very beneficial to gut health and add interesting flavours to meals.

Podcast review - Force of Nature

This "is a podcast about performance in farming, food systems, business, and life. Hosted by Conan Moynihan, it explores what it really takes to build resilient, high-performing systems by getting the fundamentals right from soil health and farm profitability to leadership, mindset, and human health. No trends or dogma. Just honest conversations with farmers, scientists, advisors, and thinkers about what actually works. Because real performance isn't built on shortcuts. It's built from the soil up."

Dylan talked about biochar in Episode 43 (Jan 27th) - not to be missed if you have livestock, especially ruminants!

Biochar Network New Zealand

BNNZ has released two articles near the end of 2025, one titled: "Biochar benefits composting in 10+ ways" and the second titled: "10 Beneficial attributes of biochar for Dairy Farms". Both articles are backed up with numerous references to academic research. The Dairy Farm animal benefits largely apply to all ruminants and also to pigs and poultry. Use the QR codes to go to each article on the bnnz.org.nz website. There are audio versions of the articles if you prefer to listen; find them on the Char Chit Chat podcast.



Dylan

Riverton Community Garden, Leader Street

Riverton Community Garden was started over ten years ago by Riverton Primary School as a place for students to be able to grow some food as part of their learning. Southland District Council made some underutilised land available and some garden beds were set up. Of course, as many schools discover, the amount of time and effort required to maintain a garden can be significant, so after a while it was decided that it would be more effective to put effort into a smaller garden in the school grounds instead.

Fortunately that wasn't the end of the garden, as Leith Gideon had been supporting the school with the garden right from the start and saw the need and opportunity to keep the garden growing, with more of a community focus.

Fast forward a few years and the Community Garden is a beautiful, productive site that provides opportunities for locals to have an allotment garden that they look after, as well as hosting a stall that is filled with fresh produce from the garden (and from local gardens too - many people bring in excess for the community). All money raised from the community stall goes right back into the garden. Leith spends many hours at the garden, keeping the general area tidy and growing produce specifically to go into the stall - all of Leith's time is voluntary, she has never been paid for any of the many hours she has put into the garden.

The community garden has a lovely park-like feeling. This is partly due to the open grassy area (half of which is mowed by Council contractors, the rest by an allotment holder) and partly because of the many fruit trees that have been planted (including plums, pears, currants - paid for by stall proceeds and the heritage apples donated by the South Coast Environment Society many years ago). The garden also hosts a small flock of chooks, which help process weeds into compost.

Leith has loved the time she has spent at the garden and the people she has met there, although it is not without challenges. One of the toughest is the people who come full of enthusiasm to be involved, get a garden bed going and then never show up again, leaving Leith to manage the - often very weedy - abandoned gardens. The amount of energy required also has its toll and Leith is keen to find some new hands and minds to take over some of the tasks there.

This community garden is a real asset to Riverton. The benefits are many, from the physical activity for gardeners to the produce made available very cheaply to the community, to the beauty and calming nature of the space. If you are keen to be involved in any way, get in touch with Leith, she'd be happy to hear from you! You can contact Leith at Leithgideon@gmail.com You can also keep up to date with garden activities via Riverton Community Garden on Facebook.



Leith takes a moment in the shade. The community stall is often well filled (there's even horse poo for your compost!).

Peat Gets the Last Word

After a very... strange summer we've finally reached the best season of the year, autumn! Fruits are ripening on their trees, mushrooms are popping up everywhere.

It's time to enjoy freshly picked apples. My recent favorite is a crispy and sweet heritage apple called Devonshire Quarandon, I can certainly recommend it. It's also time to prepare for the winter, I would say "the cold winter" but, let's face it, this is Southland. We'll be enjoying 30°C weather.

Now we begin planting strawberries (*small 4th wall break, I've heard that there's a whole article dedicated to strawberries in this issue!*) and start our elderberry harvests, although only if you had self-control and didn't turn it all into elderflower champagne!

Autumn is, and will forever be, my favorite season. The crisp air and crisper leaves, I also take no shame in admitting to the fact I love having an excuse to get out of bed late. Winter is getting closer and the first frosts are appearing, in fact, as of the moment I'm typing this up, we just had our first frost of the year.

Now I have summer cleanup to deal with, the clutches of rotten eggs hidden in bushes and wasps nests in long grass.

And yet, I still look forward to the cool autumn season.

Eat apples, gather leaves, make jam and think about coming to the annual Riverton Harvest Festival, I might even be working at the front desk when you do!

Peat is a young Riverton local who has volunteered regularly at Riverton Environment Centre for nearly five years.



Peat collects Peasgood Nonsuch apples to cook up for breakfast.

Peat