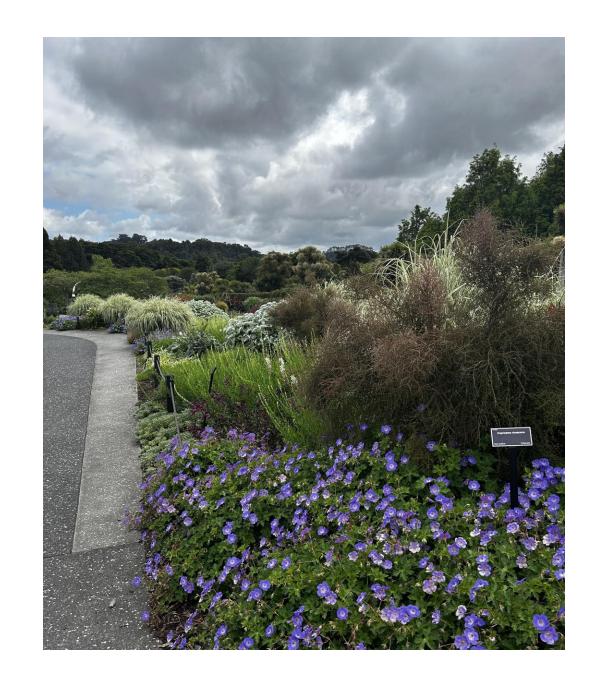
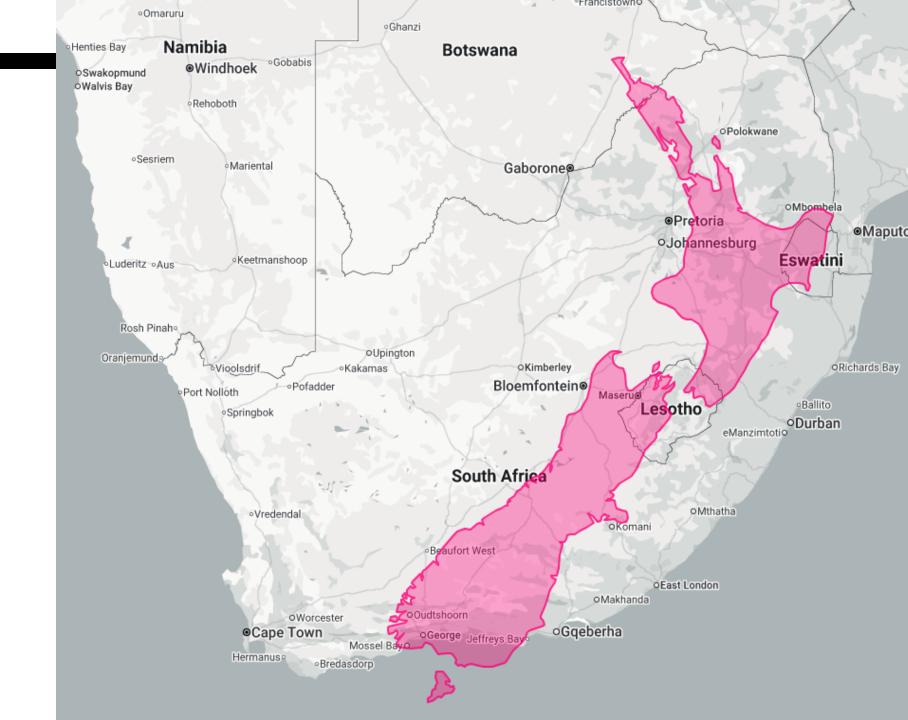
Ornamental Horticulture in New Zealand

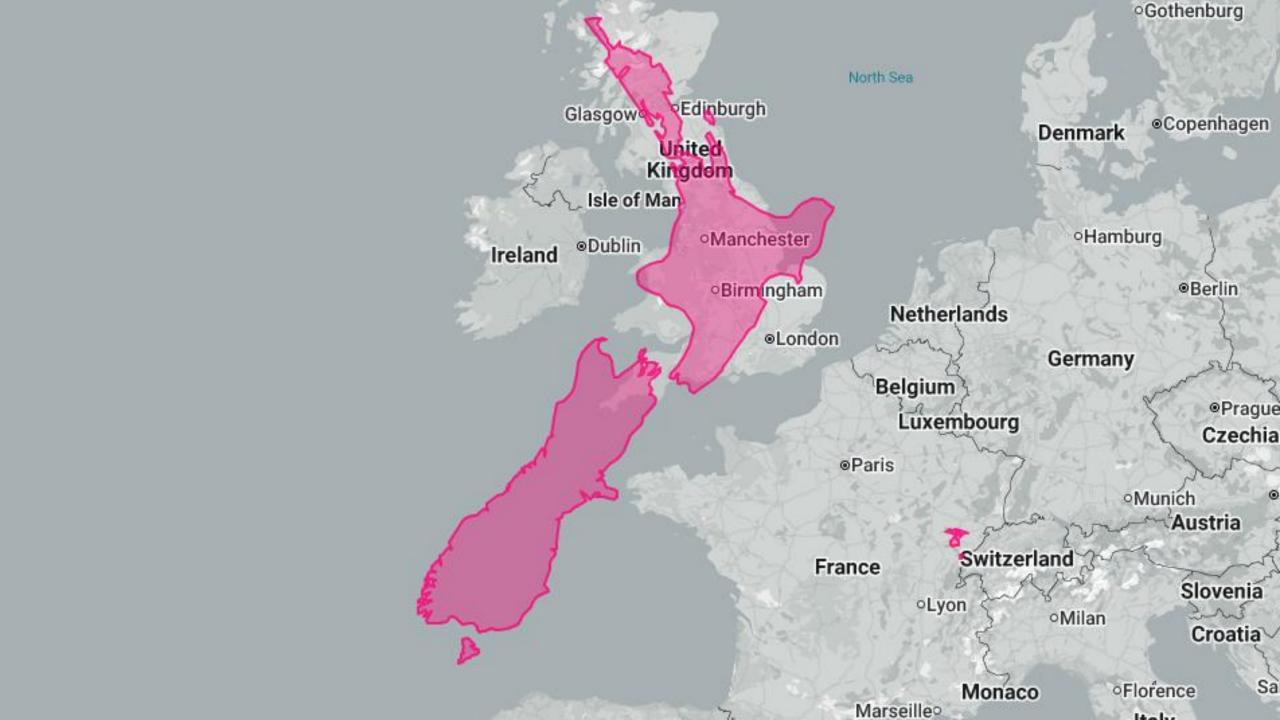
Jake Linklater



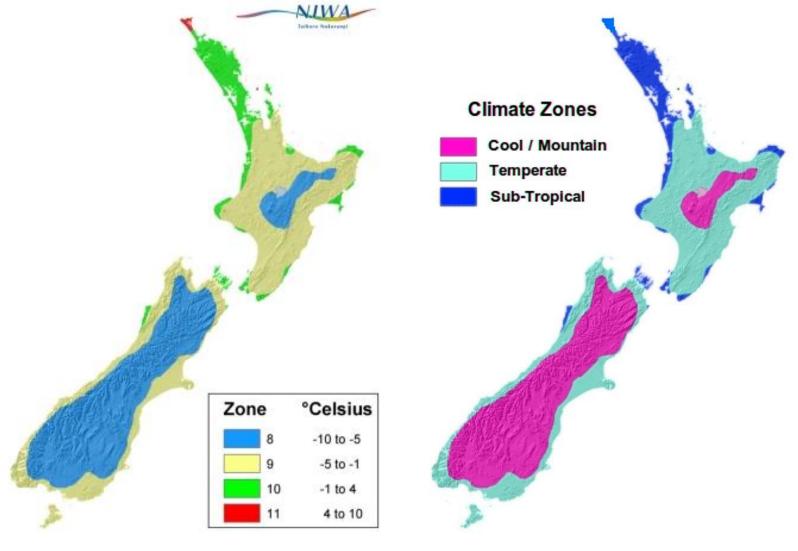
The True size of NZ

- New Zealand is approximately 268,838 sq km which is roughly about ¼ of South Africa or NZ1/SA4.5
- But bigger than the United Kingdom.

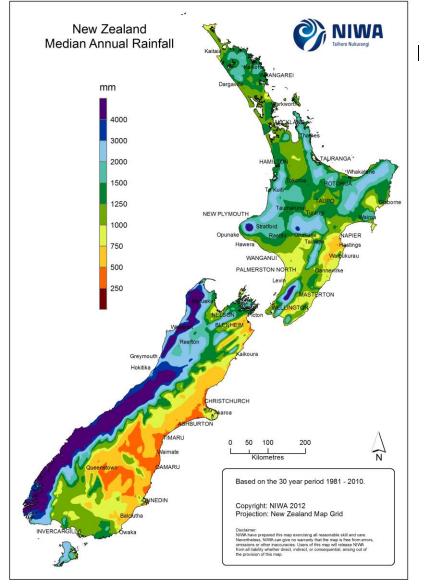


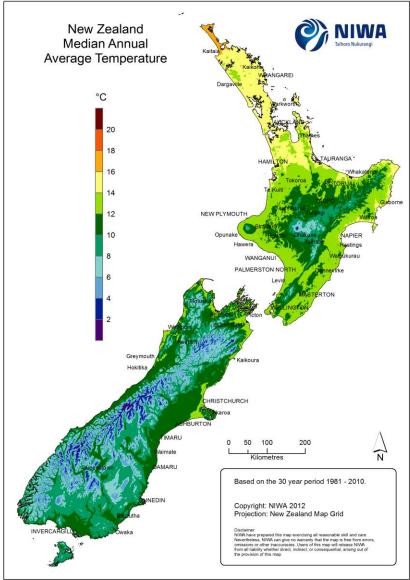


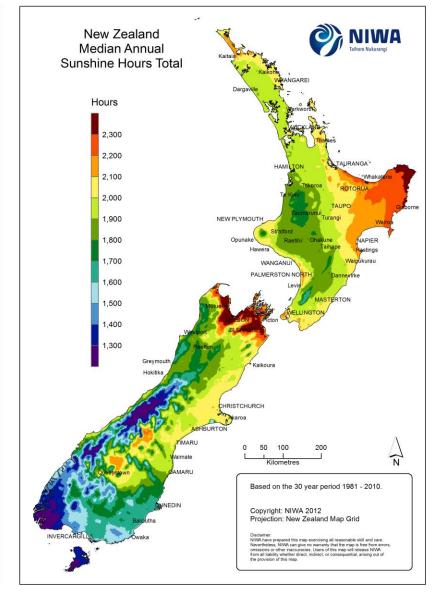
New Zealand's Climate



United States Department of Agriculture's Plant Hardiness Zones system representation of NZ







Figures taken from Earth Sciences NZ (2025)

Original NZ gardens

 Māori settled in NZ between 1250-1300 and brought along with them plants such as kūmara (sweet potato) which is thought to have originally come from South America

Māori then started cultivation of Native Plants for food use.

- Cabbage trees (Cordyline australis) grown for edible rhizomes
- Karaka trees planted near settlements for fruit
- Bracken rhizomes eaten when other root crops were scarce



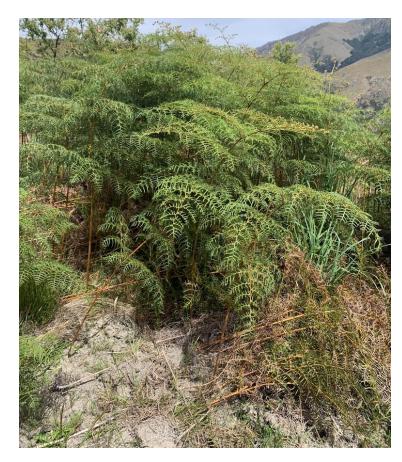
Māori Kūmara garden. Photo: Atlas obscura by Anne Ewbank



Cordyline australis (cabbage trees)



Karaka (Corynocarpus laevigatus)



Bracken (Pteridium esculentum)

Ornamental use at Māori gardens

- Māori cultivated attractive native shrubs as settlement sites overlap with distributions of:
 - Kākā beak (Clianthus maximus)
 - Napuka (Veronica speciosa)
- They used them to help judge the seasons depending on flowering time.
- We know that they did use them around their settlements for visual appeal.





European arrival (mid 19th century)

- They weren't really interested in native plants unless they had economically value such as for timber or food.
- Settler vegetable gardens were divided into beds with gravel paths, with crops rotated and manured regularly to keep soils fertile.
- The focus was on food crops initially, but settlers also introduced ornamental flowers and shrubs to add colour around their homes.
- Popular choices included roses, geraniums, hollyhocks, fuchsias, marigolds, jasmine, and violets, often grown in narrow borders beside houses and paths.
- Lawns of fine English grass were rare, as most families couldn't spare the time or cost to establish them until
 the late 19th century.

Symmetry in New Zealand's First Botanic Gardens



Victoria Esplanade Garden

- In European settlement, New Zealand gardens were shaped by English traditions, with settlers recreating manicured lawns, geometric beds, and ornate fountains.
- These formal gardens became symbols of status and refinement, reflecting colonial aspirations to mirror European elegance and sophistication.
- Symmetry was highly valued, with rose beds and garden layouts designed in balanced, orderly patterns to emphasise control and tidiness.

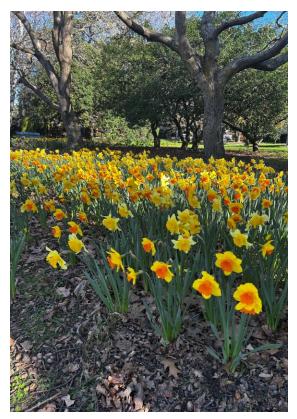


Wellington Botanic Garden





20th century. More of the same...





London plane street trees 12/10/24

- Most immigration in NZ and heritage in general was from Britain, so people wanted English themed gardens to remind them of home. Plants such as perennial borders, rose gardens, rhododendrons and nicely trimmed box hedges. Trees such as English oak, Sycamore, Elms and London plane trees were popular.
- Spring bulbs such as Daffodils and Tulips were and still are popular.
- As the economy grew. People could now afford larger sections and the ability to have lawns along with their own vegetable gardens in the back part of the section on quarter acre.

Daffodil garden bed. Christchurch 7/09/2025

Roses in NZ

- Roses were introduced to New Zealand by early missionaries and settlers in the early 1800s, primarily as a connection to their home (Europe).
- So popular, there are 23 regional rose societies in NZ and one national one. South Africa has 5 for reference.
- Not as popular as they once were, but still common among gardens and the older generation.





Photos by Hayden Foulds

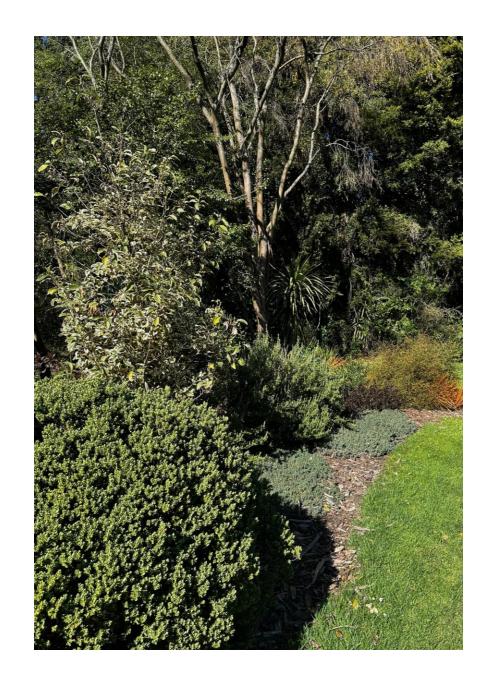
Today



- English style gardens are still prevalent but not as popular as they were in the 19th and 20th century.
- Establishing native plants in gardens has been gaining traction since the 80's.
- Often there is a mix of exotic and native plants in gardens, making use of the best of both worlds.

The rise of native plants in gardens

- Establishing native plants in gardens has been gaining traction since the 80's.
- The science on benefits of planting native plants became apparent.
 Planting to establish natural ecosystems that were good for wildlife. For example, attracting other native organisms such as birds, lizards and insect pollinators.
- Generally native gardens are considered low maintenance so they are self-sustain well.
- Native plants in New Zealand were never especially prized for their flowers, but attention started to turn to the contrast of foliage with leaf colours and shapes of plants becoming features in their own right.
- More and more cultivated varieties started being bred from natural forms and hybrids of native plants.









Hebe's (Veronica genus)

- Over 1000 cultivars.
- One of our best ornamental plants that are now all over the world.
- There are over 80 species and they hybridise well which has given us many different cultivars.









Common South African plants in NZ

- Protea's Very popular (Protea, Leucospermum and Leucadendron).
- Agapanthus
- Aloe
- Ice Plant -Carpobrotus species. But now considered a weed on NZ coast lines.



Agapanthus trials

Weed Status:

- Classified as an invasive weed in parts of New Zealand (especially northern regions) where it spreads aggressively.
- Not yet officially declared a weed in Canterbury, but potential exists.

Environmental Concern:

- Can "jump the garden fence" and establish in wild areas.
- Dense stands form, excluding native plants and altering ecosystems.

Current Research/Trials:

 Nationwide trials (e.g., Christchurch Botanic Gardens) testing low-fertility or sterile cultivars that are safer for use in gardens and landscapes.

Management:

 Councils and gardeners encouraged to choose eco-friendly cultivars.





Nurseries of New Zealand

Exotic & Native Mix

- Many nurseries supply a broad range, from common exotic ornamentals roses, fruit trees, hedging, ecotic trees and natives.
- Serves landscapers, councils, retail garden centres, and private gardens.

Native-Only Nurseries

• Specialise in ecosourced native plants for ecological restoration, revegetation, and conservation.

Scale & Structure

- Ranges from small community-based charities to large commercial operations producing millions of plants annually.
- Strong focus on high-quality propagation and plant health standards (**Plant Pass** biosecurity scheme).







Stronger focus on automation over the last 5-10 years. Increasing production to meet demand

- Many nurseries invested in automation of the COVID period as there was a boom in landscaping projects across the country as people started spending money in NZ as they could not travel overseas. A significant boom compared to pre COVID.
- Spends up production and gets staff members working in other parts of the nursery such as crop care and Maintenace.



Where I work - Nova Trust



Nova Trust (overall)

- Established 1981 in Templeton, Canterbury.
- A charitable social enterprise combining drug and alchohol addiction rehabilitation with real work opportunities.
- Operates enterprises in horticulture, farming, firewood, and hospitality, with all profits supporting recovery and community programmes.
- 🐕 Nova Natives (horticulture)
- Native plant nursery supplying ecosourced plants for restoration and landscaping.
- Provides training in propagation, irrigation, dispatch, and nursery management.
- Connects commercial plant production with social impact, funding rehabilitation while restoring NZ biodiversity.
- Nova Fresh (horticulture)
- Commercial horticulture enterprise focused on fruit, vegetables, and seasonal crops.
- Offers training in large-scale production, harvest, and supply chains.
- Supports Nova Trust's mission while supplying local markets and partners.



Thankyou for listening.

- Feel free to get in touch with me at <u>jakelinklater@gmail.com</u> for any questions you might have about horticulture in NZ. I am more than happy to talk plants and horticulture.
- Follow my horticultural instagram page @fromrootstoleavenz for all things horticulture in New Zealand.

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