

Exciting changes at Ōtari-Wilton's Bush!

Our Threatened Species Collection has just expanded into the space once known as the Cultivar Garden.

Why a Threatened Species Garden?

Protecting threatened species is a key role of botanic gardens. Here at Ōtari, we share the stories of plant conservation projects at Ōtari and across Aotearoa, giving you the chance to see these taonga up close.

Behind the Scenes at Ōtari

Much of our conservation mahi happens out of sight, in the Lions Ōtari Plant Conservation Laboratory and our nursery:

- In the lab, our team researches how to grow rare species and stores seeds for the future.
- In the nursery, young plants are carefully raised for restoration projects and reintroduction into the wild.

The Threatened Species Garden is how we showcase some of this hidden work, bringing these special plants into view so you can see them for yourself.

What Happened to the Cultivar Garden?

Don't worry - not all of those plants have disappeared! Cultivars like the horopito (*Pseudowintera colorata*) topiary balls have been carefully moved to the Curator's House Garden beside the Leonard Cockayne Centre. This space now highlights native cultivars you can grow at home.

Plants to look out for



Ngutukākā (kākābeak, *Clianthus maximus*)

Once found across the East Coast of the North Island, ngutukākā is now Nationally Critical, with only around 150 plants remaining in the wild.

- Easy to grow in gardens, but in the wild it's heavily browsed by goats, deer, and other introduced animals.
- Check out the mahi of the Ngutukākā Festival, where communities come together to celebrate and protect this taonga species.



Rātā moehau (*Metrosideros bartlettii*)

Found only in a small area of the Far North near Te Pahi, this striking white-flowered tree is one of Aotearoa's rarest. Fewer than 30 wild trees are known to survive.

- Like other members of the myrtle family, it is threatened by myrtle rust, which attacks new growth, flowers, and seedlings.
- Habitat loss and its tiny population size make it especially vulnerable. At Ōtari, we help safeguard this taonga species through cultivation and seed banking, ensuring it has a future.



Leptinella tenella

A delicate, creeping herb with tiny fern-like leaves, *Leptinella tenella* is a quiet survivor that hugs the ground in damp, open places.

- It has a very restricted natural range, making it highly vulnerable to habitat loss.
- Invasive weeds easily crowd it out, while changes to wetland and streamside habitats have further reduced where it can grow. By cultivating it here, we can protect populations outside its natural range and showcase a plant that's often overlooked in the wild.



Veronica speciosa

A low-growing shrub with vivid magenta flower spikes, this hebe is a striking part of our collection.

- Although it's a popular garden plant, in the wild it is naturally rare, restricted to small areas of the North Island's coastal and lowland habitats.
- Habitat loss, competition from weeds, and browsing animals put pressure on wild plants. Growing it helps ensure its survival and shows that familiar garden plants can be threatened in their natural homes.