



## LIZARD GARDENS – A Planting Guide

New Zealand's skinks and geckos have experienced chronic decline in the face of introduced pests, namely rats, pet cats, mice, hedgehogs and mustelids (stoats, ferrets and weasels). These days most peoples' experience of lizards is via the one their cat brought in. This will continue to be the norm, unless we do something about it!

The three main things you can do to help skinks and geckos in your backyard are to provide food, shelter and undertake pest control.

Food: berries and nectar from fruiting and flowering native plants, insects and moisture i.e. lots of mulch.

Shelter: rock piles, rotting logs, driftwood, stacks of timber, retaining walls, don't throw out your prunings, dump them in a pile out of the way, skinks will thank you for it.

Pest control: get trapping! Trapping rats and mice is a start but hedgehogs are actually a real problem for lizards in urban settings. Consider getting a DOC200 to trap those spiny pests. You can bury them under your native plants to provide an excellent source of fertiliser. Bait is effective for rodents in particular, and means you don't have to deal with dead bodies. Also, keep your cat inside at night and consider not replacing it when it dies.

To help you get started, this planting guide has been developed by gardeners and conservationists from the Kāpiti Coast. We live in a harsh coastal sand environment battered by salt spray, high wind and regular droughts. The following plant list has been developed with that in mind.

Latin	Common	Grows to	Prefers	Good for
<b>GROUND COVER</b>				
<i>Acaena pallida</i>	Sand bidibid, piripiri	Height 15cm, spread 1m; vigorous ground cover	Glossy green leaves up to 10cm long. Red-tinged flower heads in summer. Velcro-like seed capsules. If humidity is high, plant it in a windy, exposed site.	Habitat
<i>Calystegia soldanella</i>	Shore bindweed, shore convolvulus, rauparaha	Height 10cm, spread 5m; ground cover/ vine	Coastal ground vine, deciduous. Mauve pink flowers (summer).	Habitat, nectar
<i>Carex pumila</i>	Sand sedge	Height 30cm, spread 2m; vigorous sedge	Will grow in most soils and conditions but does best in a freely draining medium in full sun. An excellent and highly under-rated sand binder.	Habitat
<i>Coprosma acerosa</i> *	Sand coprosma, tātaraheke, tarakupenga	Height 40cm, spread 50cm; ground cover	A small scrambling shrub with yellow/green leaves, colouring varies regionally. Translucent pale blue berries in summer, needs open exposed locations to perform well.	Habitat, food

\*If you can't decide what to plant first, we have suggested a 'Top 5' to get you going. In combination, these five provide an excellent source of food, shelter and habitat to compliment the rocks and driftwood you are now no doubt inspired to start collecting for your garden!

Disphyma australe	NZ ice plant, horokaka	Height 5cm, spread 1m; ground cover	A creeping succulent with a sprawling habit and fleshy green/red leaves. Flowers are white/pink which open and close to the light levels. Tolerates very dry salty conditions. Often found on coastal cliffs. Needs full sun.	Habitat, food
Ficinia spiralis	Pīngao	Height 0.6m, spread 2m; sedge	A native foredune stabilising plant, golden/orange leaves form on stiff tufts along runners on and under the sand. Although it will tolerate most soils and moisture regimes, it obviously does best in coastal situations within active sand dunes.	Habitat, food
Muehlenbeckia axillaris	Creeping pōhuehue	Height 15cm, spread 1m; ground cover	Forms a dense dark green mat. Covered in small white flowers (summer). Will climb over rocks and low plants.	Habitat, food
Pimelea prostrata	NZ daphne, pinātoro	Height 20cm, spread 1m; ground cover	Grey foliage. White flowers (spring-autumn). Rock gardens.	Habitat, food
Spinifex sericeus	Silvery sand grass, kōwhangatara	Height 20cm, spread 3m; grass	A native foredune stabilising plant, hairy silver grey leaves which grow into long rhizomes trapping the sand.	Habitat
Tetragonia implexicoma	Beach spinach, kōkihi	Height 20cm, spread 2m; herb	A fleshy plant with a sprawling habit. Large green/red leaves. Found on sand dunes, gravel beaches and in rocky areas. Flowers yellow, followed by dark red and fleshy seeds.	Habitat, food
<b>SMALL SHRUBS AND GRASSES</b>				
Apodasmia similis	Jointed wire rush, oioi	Height 1.5m; slow creeping rush	A reed with fine grey/green leaves, with jointed intervals. Tolerates salty water and forms large clumps. Goes orange when exposed to salt.	Habitat, shelter
Aciphylla squarrosa	Speargrass, Spaniard, Taramea	Height 1m, spread 1m; tall flower spike	Bluish grey spiky foliage. Prefers dry sites. In areas where humidity is high plant it in a windy, exposed site.	Habitat, shelter
Arthropodium sp.*	Renga lily, rengarenga, rock lily	Height 75cm, spread 75cm;	Particularly robust form with grey-green glaucous foliage. White flowers. Frost tender. Requires snail management.	Habitat
Asplenium bulbiferum	Hen and chicken fern, pikopiko	Height 75cm, spread 75cm; fern	Graceful, deep green fronds which develop tiny bulbils or "chickens". Best grown in shade.	Habitat
Carex testacea	Speckled Sedge, Trip Me Up	Height 40cm, spread 50cm; sedge	An attractive bright orange clump forming grass. Grows in full sun, needs sandy free-draining conditions. Long strains hold seed heads in summer which can be up to 2 metres long.	Habitat
Coprosma rhamnoides	Coprosma rhamnoides	Height 1.5m; spread 1m; dense shrub	Tightly divaricating shrub with very small leaves. Plant several to get dark red fruit on the female. Can be shaped as desired.	Habitat, food

Euphorbia glauca	Shore spurge, waiū atua	Height 0.5m, spread 1m; herb	Coastal plant with lush soft blue-green foliage, green/red stems and a wide creeping habit. Spreads by rhizomes forming a loose clump. Plant of ecological importance. Now in serious decline due to coastal development and weed competition.	Habitat
Ficinia nodosa	Wīwī, knobby club rush	Height 0.5m, spread 0.5m; sedge	Long narrow wire like stems with a sharp point at the top, brown seed-heads protrude from one side of the stem. Prefers exposed wind swept areas, grows well in clay or sand, very versatile coastal plant as it tolerates almost all conditions.	Habitat
Libertia perigrinans	New Zealand iris, mīkoikoi	Height 0.5m, spread 1m;	A rhizome spreading plant that is now quite rare in the wild. It grows in open, poorly draining ground under scrub or on coastal dunes and cliffs.	Habitat
Melicytus crassifolius*	Thick-leaved māhoe	Height 1m, spread 1m; shrub	Hardy. Stout rigid interlacing recurving branches. Small dark green leaves. Profuse white berries.	Habitat, food
Muehlenbeckia astonii	Shrubby tororaro	Height 1.5m, spread 1m; shrub	Zig-zagging branches. Small heart-shaped leaves are deciduous giving a fascinating naked winter appearance. Nationally threatened in the wild but common in cultivation.	Habitat, food
Ozothamnus leptophyllus	Cottonwood, tauhinu	Height 1.5m, spread 1m; shrub	Silvery coloured compact shrub with honey scented flowers in spring followed by fluffy-tailed seeds in summer.	Habitat
Phormium cookianum	Coastal flax, wharariki	Height 1m, spread 1.5m;	Weeping green foliage. Very hardy in exposed conditions. Yellow flower stalk (2m) attracts tui in spring. Plant away from edge of lawn to avoid entangling the mower.	Habitat, nectar
Pimelea villosa	Sand daphne, autetaranga	Height 30cm, spread 1m; shrub	A low growing plant with a free flowering habit that has masses of white flowers followed by translucent crimson berries. Leaves are blue/ green and covered in tiny hairs. In the wild this plant is endangered with small pockets of plants found in localised back dune areas throughout the country.	Habitat, food
Plagianthus divaricatus	Salt-marsh ribbonwood, mākaka	Height 2m, spread 1.5m; shrub	Coastal estuary plant will survive in soil wet from salt water. Forms a tangled reddish bush along shell banks. Extremely hardy and forms an elegant shrub in the garden with hundreds of tiny white flowers in spring.	Habitat
Poa billardierei	Sand tussock, hinarepe	Height 50cm, spread 30cm; grass	Coastal dune specialist, forms erect tufted clumps and compact crown, leaves are shiny golden green and sharply pointed. Hardy.	Habitat

LARGE SHRUBS AND VINES				
Clematis forsteri	Forster's clematis, puawānanga	Height 3m, spread 1m; vine	Abundant honey-scented white flowers (spring). Likes cool moist roots and a sunny position.	Habitat, nectar
Coprosma crassifolia	Coprosma crassifolia	Height 2m, spread 2m; shrub	Stiffly branched. Forms a rigid, glossy, dark green, bushy shrub in the sun. Excellent coastal hedge.	Habitat, food
Coprosma propinqua*	Mingimingi	Height 2m, spread 2m; shrub	Divaricating shrub with a range of forms, but all small-leaved. The female has blue fruit. Frequently a swamp dweller.	Habitat, food
Coprosma repens	Taupata	Height 3m, spread 3m; small tree/large shrub	Large dark green glossy leaves. Orange berries on females. Coastal & frost tender.	Habitat, food
Coprosma virescens	Coprosma virescens	Height 2m, spread 1.5m; shrub/small tree	Small, delicate, bright green leaves. An attractive shrub to small tree that does best in full sun but will tolerate moderate shade. Should be planted in a free draining but moist, fertile soil.	Habitat, food
Corokia cotoneaster	Korokio	Height 2m, spread 1.5m; shrub	Yellow flowers (spring). Red berries (autumn). Its tight divaricating form and intriguing shape makes an ideal hedging for dry sunny situations. Grey foliage with black stems.	Habitat, nectar, food
Cortaderia toetoe	Toetoe	Height 2m, spread 2.5m; grass	Greyish green foliage. Erect flowering head in summer. Good shelter or beautiful specimen plant.	Habitat
Muehlenbeckia complexa*	Pōhuehue	Height 5m, spread 5m; vigorous vine	Drought resistant wiry vine which provides an ideal coastal groundcover. Small sweet smelling flowers in spring followed by a fleshy ice coloured cup with black seed in the centre.	Habitat, food
Olearia solandri	Coastal tree daisy	Height 4m, spread 3m; shrub	Excellent tree for the edge of tidal estuaries. Small yellowish leaves. Abundant fragrant flowers (autumn). Extremely hardy and can be kept clipped to a hedge.	Habitat
Parsonsia heterophylla	NZ jasmine, kaihua	Height 5m, spread 2m; vine	Lightly fragrant small cream flowers (spring-summer). Juvenile foliage markedly different to the mature adult foliage.	Habitat
Phormium tenax	NZ flax, harakeke	Height 3m, spread 3m;	Red flower stalk (3-4m summer). Vigorous sturdy growth. Tolerates wet and/or coastal conditions. Plant away from edge of lawn to avoid entangling the mower.	Habitat, nectar
Solanum laciniatum	Poroporo	Height 2m, spread 2m; shrub	Fascinating foliage with blue-purple flowers and orange berries throughout year. Fast growing and self-seeding.	Habitat, food
Veronica stricta	Koromiko	Height 4m, spread 2.5m; large shrub	Long pale green leaves and long white flower spikes (spring). Fast growing. Prefers open habitats on forest margins.	Habitat, nectar
TREES				
Cordyline australis	Cabbage tree, tī kōuka	Height 8m, spread 3m; tree	A classic New Zealand icon. Clusters of scented flowers (spring). Best planted at the back to limit spread of old leaves.	Habitat, nectar, food

Dodonaea viscosa	Akeake	Height 4m, spread 2m; tree	Hardy, coastal tree. Attractive pale green seed (summer). Best kept lightly trimmed.	Habitat
Entelea arborescens	Whau	Height 5m, spread 4m; tree	Large, soft leaves. Large white flowers (spring), spikey seed pods. Fast growing in rich soils. Grows in sheltered coastal valleys.	Habitat, nectar
Melicope ternata	Wharangi	Height 4m, spread 3m; tree	Aromatic, lime green foliage forms attractive round tree. Slightly frost tender. Coastal.	Habitat, nectar, food
Melicytus ramiflorus	Māhoe	Height 5m, spread 3m; tree	Very fast growing. Good filler for shady sites. Very hardy. Beautifully scented flowers followed by purple berries.	Habitat, food
Olearia paniculata	Akiraho	Height 5m, spread 2.5m; tree	Attractive specimen or suitable for hedging. Small, abundant, fragrant flowers (autumn). Good habit. Coastal.	Habitat, food
Sophora molloyi	Cook Strait kōwhai	Height 3m, spread 3m; small tree	A small dense kowhai tree with bunches of drooping yellow flowers. Inhabits shores of Cook Strait. Hardy	Habitat, nectar
Streblus banksii	Large-leaved milk tree, tūrepo	Height 6m, spread 4m; tree	A fast growing tree which makes an ideal specimen tree. Small dark red berries (summer). Can be used as a hedge as it responds well to clipping. Prefers a deep, free draining, fertile soil. Once established it is very drought tolerant.	Habitat, food
Veronica parviflora	Hebe, koromiko tāraanga	Height 4m, spread 3m; shrub/small tree	A large growing Hebe with lime green foliage and rather open habit and prolific white flowers. Creates a large mushroom-like form.	Habitat

### A few tips:

New Zealand has high rates of dioecy (separate male and female plants). Females are the ones that produce fruit. It's common in the Coprosma genus. Consequently, it's good to plant more than one of the same species to increase your chances of having a male and female and therefore food for skinks and geckos (and birds!).

Consider plant spacing. Don't be shy to plant different species close together. This will enable lizards to move around and provide good shelter as well as the ability to escape predators more easily. Vines are really good at joining habitat too.

Messy gardening is great for lizards.

Think about where lizards might be hiding before you let loose with a weedeater, or mulcher.

Have fun and get creative!

This handout can be downloaded from: <https://kapitibush.org.nz/>