



# Ecosourcing

## Protecting local biodiversity

### What is 'ecosourcing'?

- Sourcing native plants from local seed for local use.
- Preserving ecological history.
- Maintaining local biodiversity.

Ecosourcing incorporates the ideas of knowing where your seed came from so you can decide where it is appropriate to plant that seed (or vice-versa), knowing where you want to plant, and collecting your seed from natural plant populations local to that site.

### Local biodiversity

Ecosourcing maintains the genetic diversity of local plants and helps keep the unique character of a landscape/place e.g. Waitākere Ranges. By maintaining local biodiversity ecological history is preserved.

### Why ecosource your plants?

You will have greater success with your restoration project or backyard planting, if you use ecosourced plants.

The idea of ecosourcing comes from the observation that plants of the same species but from different localities, vary in their characteristics including growth and tolerance of environmental conditions. Although we may call them by the same name, there are often subtle genetic differences between the same types of plants from different regions. Some plant species from the South Island are as alien to Auckland as non-New Zealand species.

Plants sourced from within the Auckland region are better adapted to conditions here, are more likely to survive and will help preserve the distinctiveness of plants from this region. By ecosourcing plants you avoid the risk of planting species which aren't naturally occurring in a locality.

► **Find out more:** phone 09 301 0101  
or visit [www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)



## Native plants should be ecosourced from within the ecological district that you are planting in.

For example, if your planting site is in the Rodney area then you should ecosource your plants from the Rodney Ecological District. This means the seeds should be collected from natural plant populations growing there.

Buying local doesn't always mean locally sourced plants e.g. plants grown or sold in the Rodney area, from seed collected in the Hunua Ranges (Hunua Ecological District), should not be planted in the Rodney Ecological District.

## Ecosourcing in the Auckland region

Ecosourcing is being promoted by Auckland Council to improve the quality and quantity of native vegetation and protect the distinctiveness of plants and ecosystems in the region. Ecosourcing also improves the habitats of native wildlife, which feed from our native trees, shrubs and grasses.

### **The principle – select plants grown from seeds collected as close as possible to where you plan to plant.**

Auckland Council requires ecosourced plants be used as part of resource consent conditions to ensure the ecological character of an area is retained. Auckland

Council Regional Parks ecosource all the plants used in their restoration planting. Many of the region's community groups operate their own ecosourcing nurseries to supply their own restoration projects with ecosourced plants e.g. TOSSI at Tawharanui Regional Park and Motutapu Restoration Trust on Motutapu Island.

## Why seeds and not cuttings?

The production of seeds in nature is a way of ensuring there is diversity within a population of plants. Each offspring grown from a seed is slightly different from the parents and it is this diversity that is important in ensuring the population can adapt to change over time.

Cuttings are simply an exact replica of the parent plant they are taken from and do not increase biodiversity.

## When should we ecosource?

Ecosourced plants will be of benefit in any native planting, including backyards.

**They are particularly important in areas:**

- of outstanding vegetation (e.g. existing areas of native forest, wetlands)
- bordering streams
- close to 'wild populations' (e.g. Waitakere Ranges, Hunua Ranges, forest remnants).

## How do I know what plants to use?

The Auckland region is divided into areas of similarity based on topography, geology, climate, soils and land use. These units are known as ecological districts and each ecological district has unique plant and forest types growing within them. There are 12 ecological districts within the Auckland region.

## Buying ecosourced plants

Many Auckland nurseries sell plants originating from Northland, Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, Canterbury or Southland, because that is where the major seed suppliers are based. Not all the native plants found for sale in our region naturally occur in our region.

Ecosourcing helps protect important areas of biodiversity such as Waitākere Ranges, Hunua Ranges, islands, coastal and lowland forest remnants and wetlands. Using ecosourced plants also reduces handling and transport costs and helps support local nurseries and related businesses.

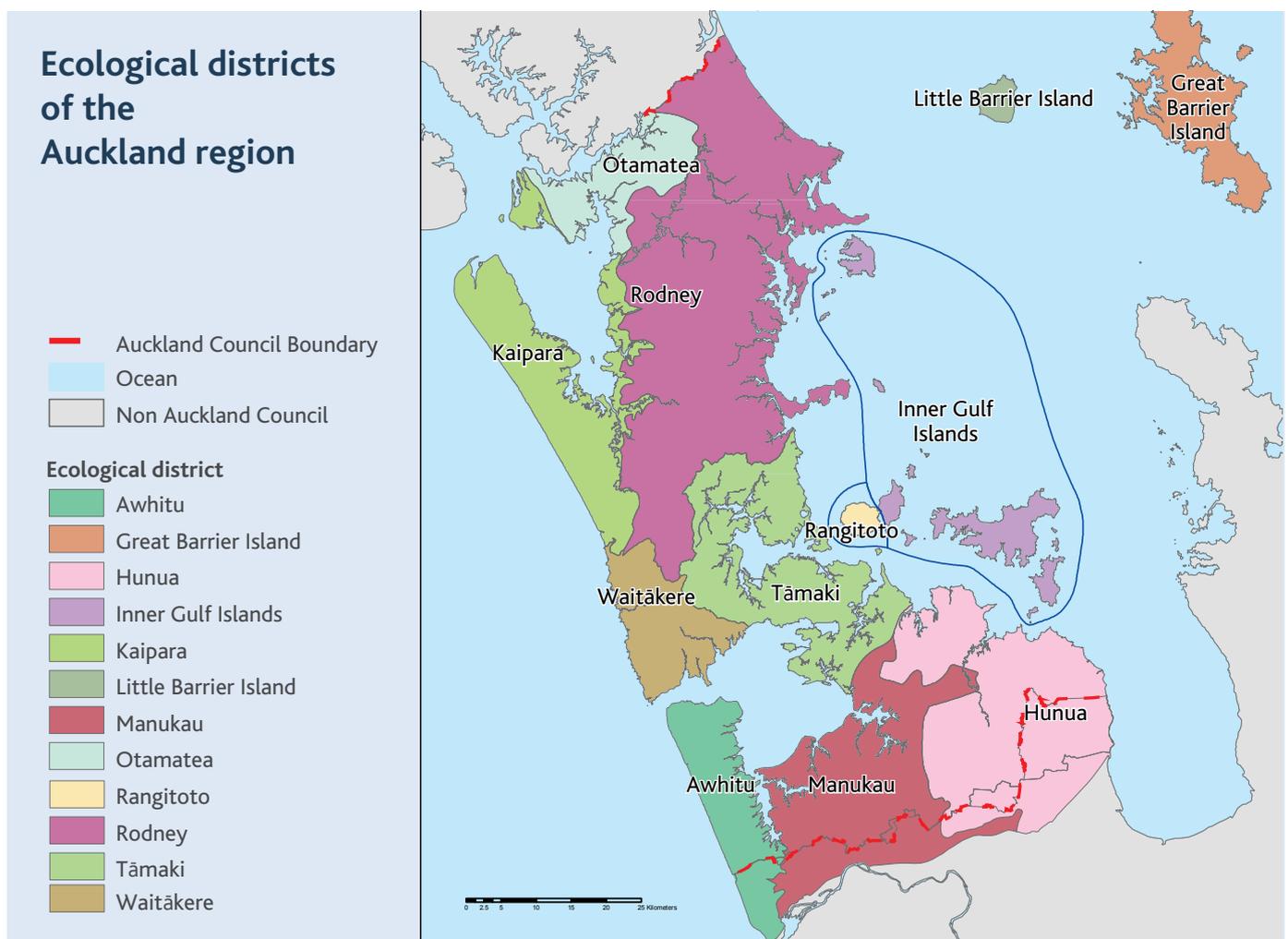
**Ask your local garden centre or nursery to stock ecosourced plants from the Auckland Region.**

## Wild Sourcing

Ecosourcing includes collecting stock from 'wild or natural sources' – the natural environment the plant originally grew in. Be sure to ask permission from the landowner before collecting seed from wild sources.

Protect the wild source and enhance biodiversity by observing the following rules of thumb:

- collect seed rather than cuttings
- when collecting seed from wild plants be careful not to cause damage by breaking off large branches
- avoid harvesting too many seeds from any one plant. The most seeds that should be harvested is 10% of the entire seed crop for a plant
- collect small amounts from many individuals to increase biodiversity
- avoid having 'favourite' plants that you go back to every year as this decreases biodiversity
- ensure seeds are ripe - the colour of fruit will often indicate if it is ripe and ready for collection
- collect seed capsules shortly before they open.



**“We can all be part of protecting, restoring and connecting Auckland’s biodiversity”**

## Need more help?

Factsheets on protection and restoration of native forest, wetlands and coastal environments are available at [www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz). Auckland Council can run workshops on do-it-yourself ecosourcing, seed collection and propagation if there is demand. Contact [biodiversity@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:biodiversity@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) for further ecosourcing advice.

The Botanic Gardens in Manukau is a collection house for data on ecosourcing. Visit the gardens to see their displays.

## Funding

You may be eligible for funding to help you protect and care for your forest, coastal, wetland or streamside planting or to grow your own ecosourced plants. For more information visit [www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

## Websites

### Auckland Council

[www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

### Nature Space

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

### New Zealand Plant Conservation Network

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

### Department of Conservation

[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

## References

Ferkins, C. 2002. Ecosourcing, Code of Practice and Ethics. Waitakere City Council.

Porteous, T. 1993. Native Forest Restoration – A Practical Guide for Landowners. Queen Elizabeth II National Trust.