



Waipapa  
Taumata Rau  
**University  
of Auckland**

# **A structure to hear community**

CoCreate Age and the Keen Gardeners project



17 November 2025



Dr Tamika Simpson

Centre for Co-Created Ageing Research

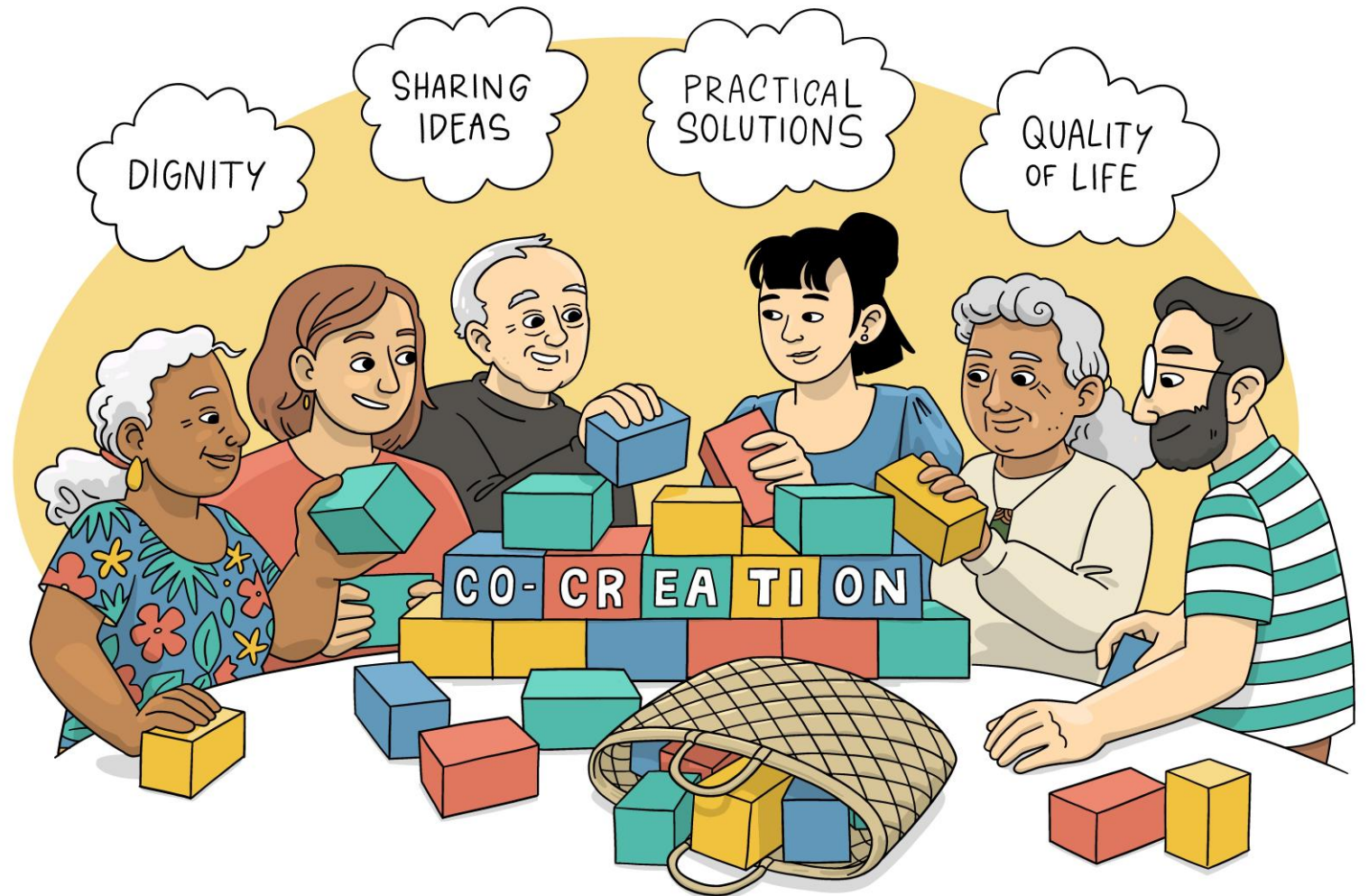
Kia ora koutou



# Today

Why a Centre for Co-Created  
Ageing Research?

*Keen Gardeners 2025, an illustrative project*





# Why a Centre for Co-Created Ageing Research?

Ageing well:

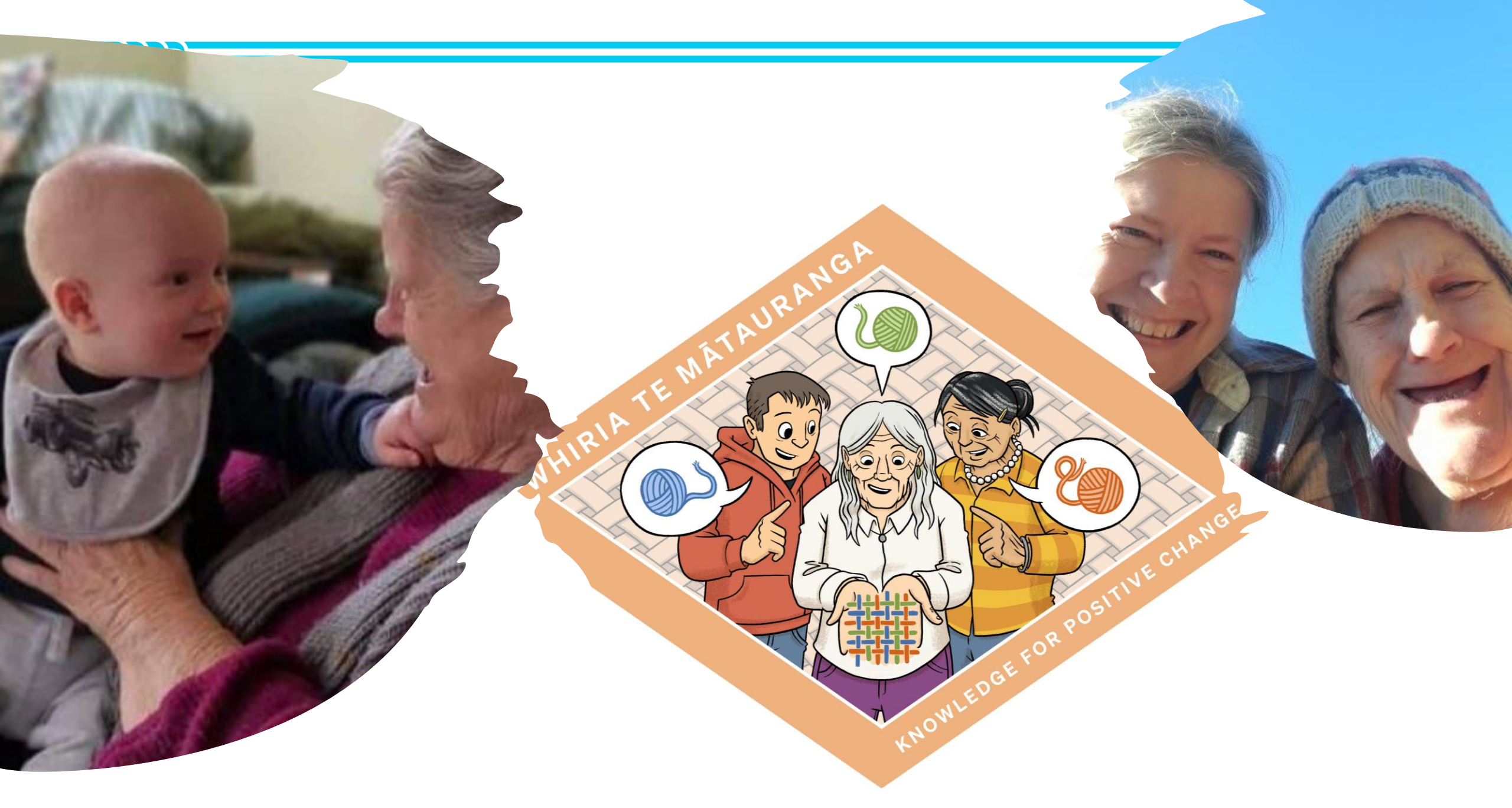
- Seeing the opportunities
- Challenging deficit perspectives
- Hearing their priorities

Transdisciplinary partnering:

- lived experience
- academic researchers
- industry
- government

Principles-based mahi







## Pou Whenua Pou Whirinaki

Waitohu designed for the Centre by  
Mokonuiarangi Smith.

**Aonui** –diverse knowledge holders and  
relates to overcoming hurdles in the learning  
process

**Te Puku o te Aonui** – Represents the  
knowledge and mana within each individual  
and the groups involved, their concerns,  
their aspirations and their values

**Kauhanga** – Represents the space in  
between and exchanges between  
contributors towards a central idea


**Pātiki** – Represents ngā hua of working  
together which is sought when there is no  
wind or disturbances. It can be seen as a  
prayer for calm and pleasant times.







## Keen Gardeners 2025, an illustrative project: Context

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- Loneliness and social isolation are experienced by older people and youth particularly.
  - World Health Assembly resolution on the essential role of social connection in combating loneliness, social isolation and inequities in health – the first to recognise social connection as an urgent public health priority.
  - There is a revival of gardening and desire to be with Papatūānuku, our Earth Mother.
  - Many of us are worried about our health and our planet and the cost of food.
  - Between 2023-2025 older people told us they wanted **meaningful activities, to contribute and be connected**. This project also responds to their priorities of:
    - Intergenerational relationships
    - Food & exercise
    - How we can keep maintaining our own gardens as we get older.

## Keen Gardeners 2025, an illustrative project: Response

- Community-based intergenerational activities are effective in reducing and preventing isolation.
- Gardening fulfils the exercise and nutrition that supports health (including as we age) and can ease household cost pressures.
- Our older gardeners who grew up with growing food and being in nature as routine, are currently an untapped resource.
- Our most experienced gardeners arguably should be routinely welcomed into the gardening revival driven by multiple concerns for health and desires for an everyday life of harmony and balance.





## We Gardeners

March 2025: All welcome intro to 'Master Gardeners'



August 2025: Keen Gardeners hybrid making workshop



## Ngā mihi nui supporters

This is a partnership between the School of Nursing, friends Tamika and Lisa Williams, all of the Keen Gardener members and The Centre for Co-Created Ageing Research.

There are many many more people who have attended events and welcomed us to theirs, University colleagues, friends and family who have encouraged us and done many many many things to help, including listening to Tamika's hopes and dreams especially.

We would not exist as a project without financial support from the Age Friendly Fund.



# Findings from the Keen Gardeners Group



Our successful Keen Gardeners project funded by Office for Seniors in 2025, showed that activities supporting friendship, fun, connection and knowledge sharing were highly valued.





# Findings from the Keen Gardeners



Make it possible for people to participate in meaningful ways that work for them.

Participation requires a feasible programme that makes sense to people, is realistic, efficient to deliver and adequately resourced.





# Findings from the Keen Gardeners

Have respectful, warm and consistent communications.

Find or create inclusive access to welcoming spaces.

Ensure the means to attend are straightforward and reliable.





# Findings from the Keen Gardeners



Include consideration of the options for 'what could happen next' in early design stages.

Know why you're doing this and remember it throughout – the best path to that outcome may not only be what you assumed.

Hold lightly so things can flow.





## Example of holding lightly

The aim of Keen Gardeners was to connect experienced gardeners as experts (fight ageism, improve connections)

Here is one of our Keen Gardeners sharing her wisdom at a community garden she has never been to before.

She was all over their Facebook post.

I am thrilled. **Not what I planned**, and more pleased for it

## Sensational seedling sale



We had an awesome day selling organic seedlings grown with love to the community. Hope your plants will fill your garden and your bellies so you can s... See more

# Reflections from a Keen Gardener



21 people attended on a Sunday morning at the library. We kept having to add more tables and chairs. A truly joyful, sharing and learning occasion. My learnings so far:

- so many simple nutrients for potted plants are available from an everyday kitchen,
- how much my balcony garden influences my cooking and eating interest and enjoyment,
- and the great pleasure of sharing this learning and joy with others.





# WASTE IS YOUR FRIEND IN THE GARDEN

**Enrich your soil by composting with:**

- Paper tissues
- Scraps
- Fruit & vegetable peels
- Leaves
- Cardboard

**Water your garden with:**

- Used (grey) water from showers, washing dishes and washing machines
- Rain water collected in buckets or rubbish bins

**Deter pests:**

- Coat plant leaves with soapy water to defeat aphids
- Sprinkle egg shells, sea shells or nut shells around plants to deter snails and slugs

**Protect your plants:**

- Use leggings, tights or stockings to tie-up tomato plants or climbing beans
- Use carpet, cardboard and sheets to keep weeds away

**Improve drainage:**

- Line the bottom of plant pots with broken crockery to prevent root rot.

**Use containers on hand:**

- Egg cartons, ice cream containers or yoghurt containers

**Grow plants in pots on your balcony**

- Find plants that love shade
- Plant along paths or on verges
- Take advantage of available space:

**Feed your garden with:**

- Sand
- Ashes (good for potatoes)
- Sawdust
- Banana peels (good for lemon trees)

**THE KEEN GARDENERS**

This poster was created by the Keen Gardeners Group, of the Centre for Co-Created Ageing, University of Auckland.  
Contact: Tamika Simpson, tamika.simpson@auckland.ac.nz

The project was funded by the Ministry of Social Development's Office for Seniors Age Friendly Fund.

**BALCONY SALADS**

**Trees**

Dwarf varieties of many trees can be grown in pots on balconies

Lemon, mandarin and fig all do well

Kawakawa, horopito and pohutukawa can grow well in pots

**Arrangement**

Pots can be placed on the ground, put on multi-tiered stands, or mounted to hanging grids or slats.

Pots should be arranged so plants get their preferred amount of sun, shelter, and rain

**Fruits/Berries**

Strawberries can be planted in small spaces in hanging baskets

Cherry tomatoes, capsicums and chillies can be grown on balconies and companion planted with herbs

Blueberries grow well in containers

**Companion Planting**

Some herbs do better when grown together

Chives repel aphids on companion plants

Rosemary, oregano, lavender, sage and thyme all like dry soil

Dill, cilantro, basil, parsley all like moist soil

**Leafy Greens**

Leafy greens provide the most bang for your buck, and can be harvested multiple times by picking just the outer leaves

**Containers**

Pots must suit the plant and have adequate drainage and depth

Cos lettuce, silverbeet, celery and rainbow chard are easily grown in pots

Celery is a good companion for brassicas and beans

**Soil**

A sandy loam is the best soil to suit a large range of herbs

40-50% sand (builder's sand)

30-40% silt (peat moss)

10-20% clay (composted manure)

Slow-acting fertilizer

**Fertilizer**

Pot plants require different types of fertilizer, depending on the plant. Homemade fertilizers are easy and accessible.

Rinsed-out milk from empty bottles provides calcium

Banana peels

Worm castings

Drained unsalted water from vegetables provides nutrients

This poster was created by the Keen Gardeners Group, of the Centre for Co-Created Ageing, University of Auckland.

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# KNOWLEDGE SOURCES FOR AT-HOME GARDENING

The infographic is centered around a pink line drawing of a person wearing a wide-brimmed hat, a long-sleeved shirt, a garden apron, and boots. They are holding a basket filled with various gardening books and a watering can. The background is a light blue sky with a few clouds. The infographic is divided into several sections, each with a yellow header and a white background, connected to the central figure by lines. The sections are: Local Libraries, Workshops & Certification, Gardening people to keep an eye out for, YouTube, Books & manuals, Apps, Social Media Groups, Community, Magazines & Blogs, Family, Friends, Neighbours, Seed suppliers, Observation & Journaling, and Podcasts. Each section lists specific resources and contact information.

**Local Libraries**  
Gardening books  
Free talks  
Seed libraries

**Workshops & Certification**  
Gardening and composting workshops at community gardens  
Earthcare Education Aotearoa  
Polytechnics (e.g. Wintec, Unitec)

**Gardening people to keep an eye out for**  
Linda Hallinan  
Jessica Hutchings  
Levi Brinsdon-Hall  
Amanda Warren (Gift the Garden)

**YouTube**  
WormsEyeView (permaculture in NZ)  
Rob's Backyard Garden (Auckland-based)  
@SelfSufficientMe (Aussie but climate-relevant)  
TV  
Hua Parakore on Whakaata Māori (Māori TV)

**Books & manuals**  
Companion Planting in NZ  
Yates Garden Guide  
Royal Horticultural Society manuals

**Apps**  
Gardenate  
PlantSnap  
PictureThis

**Social Media Groups**  
Facebook:  
The Māori Gardener  
Backyard Gardeners NZ  
Reddit:  
r/gardening or r/permaculture

**Community**  
Community gardens  
Crop Swap Aotearoa  
Garden ramble/Open garden events

**Magazines & Blogs**  
NZ Gardener Magazine  
Organic NZ Magazine  
ThisNZLife

**Family, Friends, Neighbours**  
with similar soil and experience in NZ microclimates – a goldmine of seasonal wisdom!

**Seed suppliers**  
Kings Seeds  
Koanga Institute  
Egmont Seeds  
Newton Seeds

**Observation & Journaling**  
Local observation and record-keeping is very useful!

**Podcasts**  
Get Growing with NZ Gardener  
The Dirt

**Myself**  
I quite frequently go back through photos on my phone and laptop to remind myself of successes/things that worked and that I enjoyed

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# What is next?

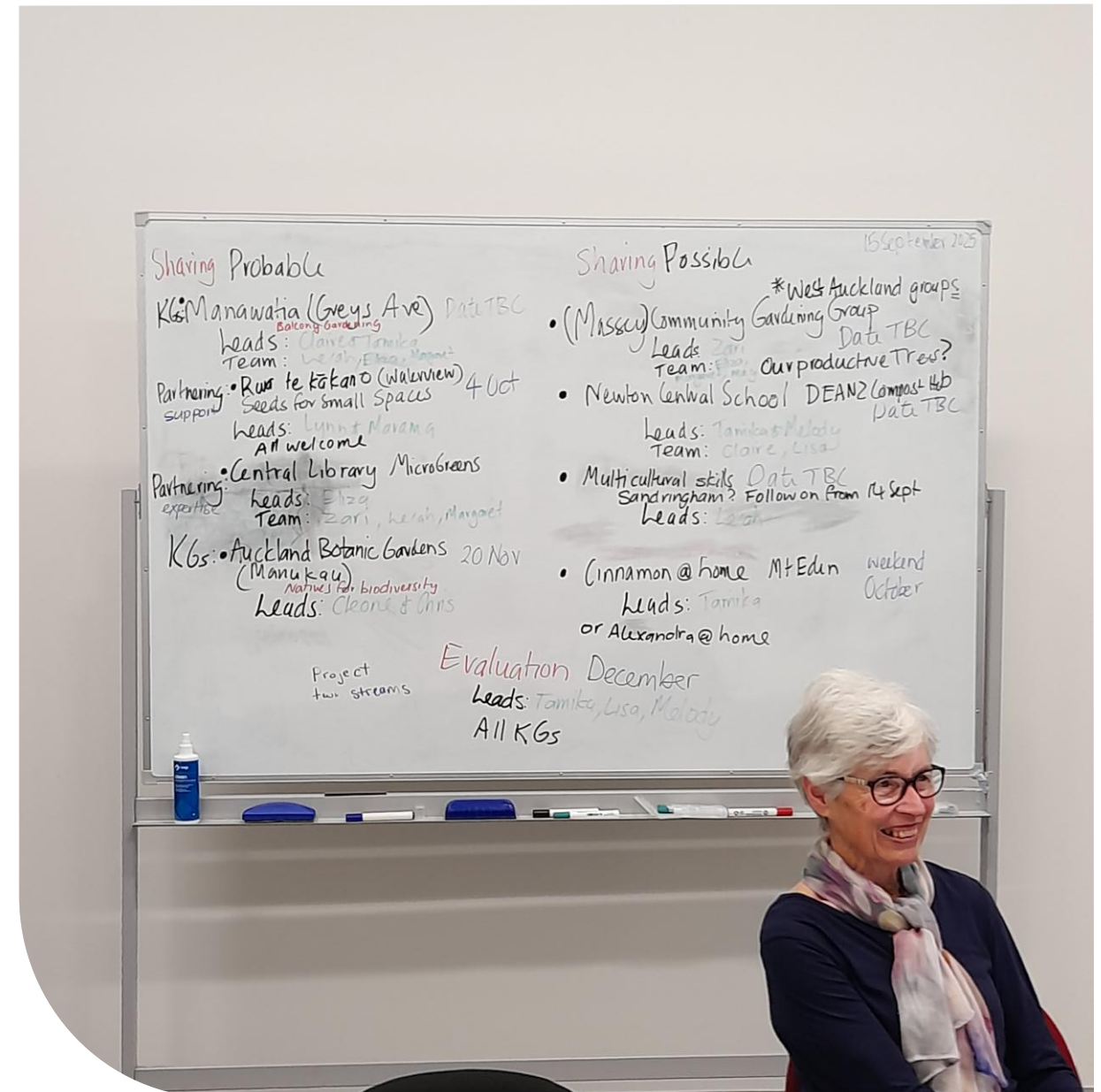
Keen Gardeners introductions in retirement villages across Tamaki Makaurau.

Attend the Participatory Design Conference in Milan in June, and International Association of Gerontology in Amsterdam in July – please let me know if you're going too.

Larger project to co-create resources with a school for growing in small spaces.

A learning visit with an experienced gardener in her 80s who sells specialist crops to local restaurants.

Establishing a garden at the University when the Centre moves to its new home in 2026 – it's a cottage with a back yard.





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# Ngā mihi

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