



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

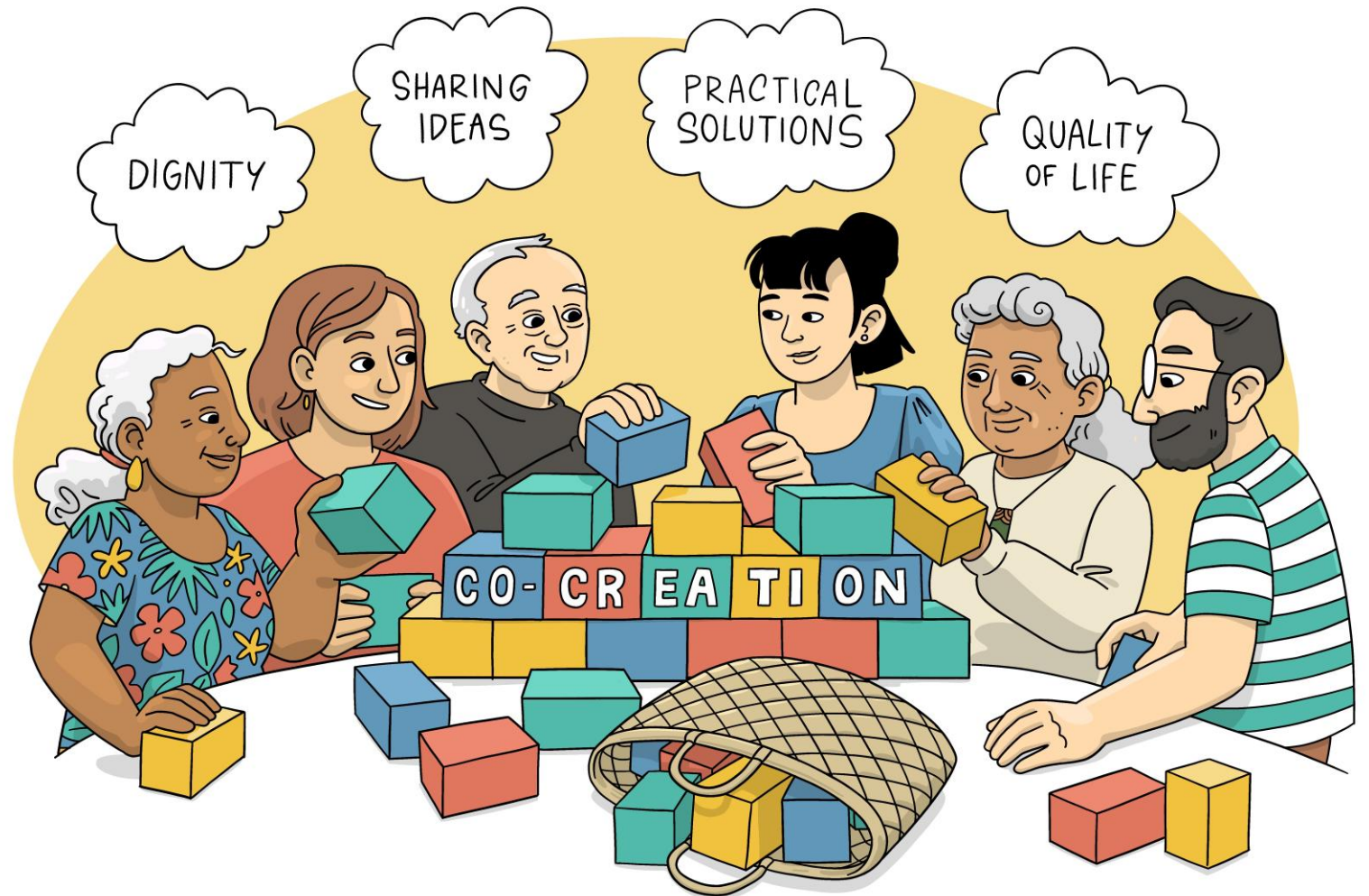
Kia ora koutou



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:

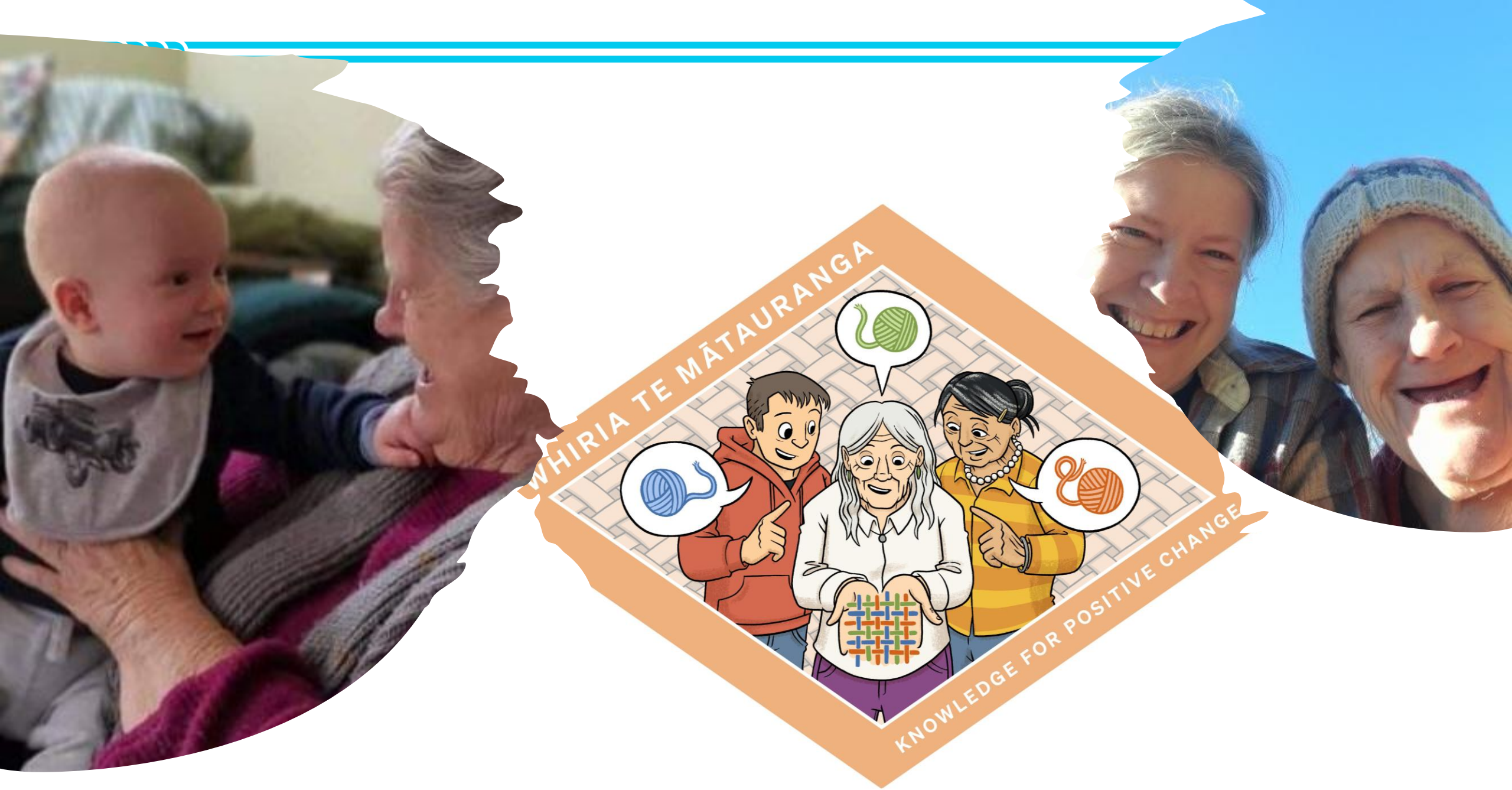
- Seeing the opportunities
- Challenging deficit perspectives
- Hearing their priorities

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
- Leaves
- Carboard
- Fruit & vegetable peels

Water your garden with:

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

Deter pests:

- Sprinkle egg shells, sea shells or nut shells around plants to deter snails and slugs

Deter pests:

- Coat plant leaves with soapy water to defeat aphids

Use containers on hand:

- Egg cartons, ice cream containers or yoghurt containers

Improve drainage:

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

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

Take advantage of available space:

- Grow plants in pots on your balcony
- Find plants that love shade
- Plant along paths or on verges

Feed your garden with:

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

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

Leafy Greens

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

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

Containers

Pots must suit the plant and have adequate drainage and depth

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

Soil

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

40-50% sand (builder's sand)

10-20% clay (composted manure)

30-40% silt (peat moss)

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

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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 garden apron, and boots. They are holding a watering can in their right hand and a book titled 'Gardener' in their left. A basket filled with various gardening books is slung over their shoulder. Surrounding this central figure are several boxes, each representing a different source of knowledge, connected by lines to the central figure. The boxes are color-coded: yellow for 'Local Libraries', 'Workshops & Certification', 'Books & manuals', 'Community', 'Family, Friends, Neighbours', 'Seed suppliers', 'Gardening people to keep an eye out for', 'Apps', 'Magazines & Blogs', 'YouTube', 'Social Media Groups', 'Observation & Journaling', and 'Podcasts'. The 'Myself' box is at the bottom center. The 'Local Libraries' box is at the top left. The 'Workshops & Certification' box is at the top center. The 'Books & manuals' box is at the top right. The 'Community' box is on the left. The 'Family, Friends, Neighbours' box is on the left. The 'Seed suppliers' box is on the left. The 'Gardening people to keep an eye out for' box is at the top right. The 'Apps' box is on the right. The 'Magazines & Blogs' box is on the right. The 'YouTube' box is at the top right. The 'Social Media Groups' box is on the right. The 'Observation & Journaling' box is on the right. The 'Podcasts' box is at the bottom right. The 'Myself' box is at the bottom center.

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)

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

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

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

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

Apps
Gardenate
PlantSnap
PictureThis

Magazines & Blogs
NZ Gardener Magazine
Organic NZ Magazine
ThisNZLife

YouTube
WormsEyeView (permaculture in NZ)
Rob's Backyard Garden (Auckland-based)
@SelfSufficientMe (Aussie but climate-relevant)

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

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?

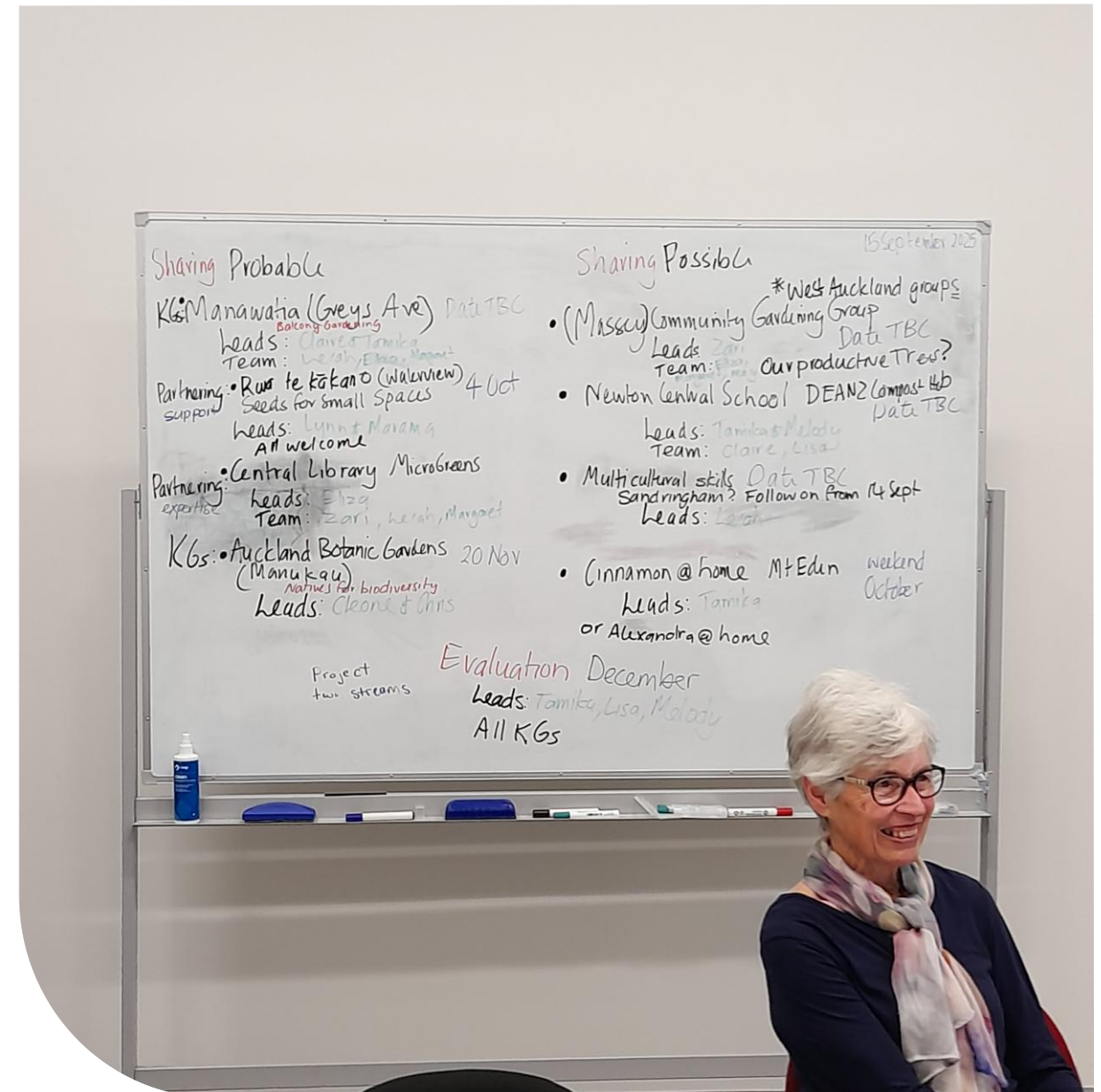
Keen Gardeners introductions in retirement villages across Tamaki Makaurau.

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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