



The Wairoa Seed Exchange Group is growing seeds of possibility, from left: Annalisa Linares, Sally Marshall, Kaye Pickering, Vicky White, Christine Selby, and Michele Griffiths.

Wairoa's Green Revolution: How a Seed Exchange is Growing More Than Just Gardens

In a quiet corner of the Wairoa Library, something remarkable is sprouting — a grassroots movement that's transforming the town by growing seeds and self-sustainability.

The Wairoa library-based Seed Exchange Group sprouted up a year ago, growing seeds, personal sovereignty, and resilience.

The group of a dozen or so women are sharing their passion for gardening and community through the seed exchange group, which is also developing seeds to suit the local environment.

The idea was launched by green thumbs Vicky White and Michele Griffiths and has blossomed over the past year. Vicky had seen seed libraries operating in other areas, recruited Michele, who has vast experience in the heritage seed industry, and approached the local library, where the staff wholeheartedly backed the idea, clearing books from shelves to make way for the seed exchange display.

The concept is like a seed bank where the 'Seedies' bag up vegetable and flower seeds, which are free to members of the community. There are no strings, no costs, just a shared belief

that everyone should have access to growing their own food.

The original stocks have been sourced by the group and are Wairoa-hardy as they have adapted to the unique local conditions and environment. The aim is a self-sustaining cycle where locals grow, harvest, and return seeds, each generation more resilient than the last. Cultivating a local legacy.

The 'Seedies' group consists of volunteers who encourage others in the community to garden and become self-sufficient.

This year, 1800 packets of seeds have flown off the shelves from the display area in the library. The group gets together twice a month to pack up the seeds, which includes recycling magazines for envelopes and labelling the seed packets. The group sits around a table in the library, where chatter about heirloom tomatoes and seed-saving techniques mixes with the rustle of making and filling seed envelopes.

"We just want people to plant seeds and grow gardens," says Vicky. "The saving of seeds can be tricky, and you need to know what you are doing, but we do hold classes to teach people how

to collect and preserve the seeds."

Michele says it's about getting back to nature. "We just love that people are taking the seeds and having a go. Ideally, it is great to have seeds brought back to us as that will help preserve the species, but the main driver is for people to learn and have a consciousness around how they can grow food for themselves."

Vicky and Michele say a bonus is the health benefits. "Gardening has a physical side, it gets people outside in the fresh air growing healthy produce and connecting families. It's satisfying to grow a plant from a seed, know how the plant has been grown, and then have it on your dinner plate. Gardening is not a lot of work if you know what you're doing, and we are happy to share what we know. You don't need a lot of space, and growing vegetables from free seeds can save you a lot of money. We saw in Cyclone Gabrielle how fragile food supply can be, so having your own garden boosts resilience. The key to the seeds we provide is that they are bio-regional, meaning they have adapted to our conditions, so they are easier to grow in our local environment."

The group also runs seasonal courses

around how to get growing and how to harvest, has developed a growing calendar and recently held a competition for people who grew plants from seeds.

Vicky and Michele are quick to credit the Wairoa Library staff for their unwavering support. "They've been amazing — they gave us room to grow, literally and figuratively."

And there's plenty of room for others to join in. "Everyone brings something different to the table. We welcome anyone with a passion for gardening — or even just a curiosity. Come down, say hi, grab some seeds. The more, the merrier."

They also encourage people to donate seeds, which they will then share with the community.

So, next time you're at the Wairoa Library, don't just check out a book — check out a packet of possibility. The seeds of change are waiting.

To get in touch with the group or for more information, please email vickybwhite@gmail.com, or head to the Wairoa Heritage Seedlings Facebook page.

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Nominations Close Fri 1 Aug 12 noon

LOCAL ELECTIONS 11 OCTOBER 2025



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PG | 1hrs 56m
Saturday 26th July 2pm

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