

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Kerryann and Michael Pomeroy, together with their son Hayden and his wife Sarah, run a large dairy farming enterprise close to the northern end of the Heaphy Track. Their forebears were



goldminers who settled the land at Bainham, 15 kilometres inland from Collingwood, in Golden Bay. Both farms are bounded by the spectacular Aorere River, which flows from Kahurangi National Park. It is known for its deep, clear swimming holes, but also for regular flooding that sweeps away bridges and floods the surrounding farmland. The Aorere Valley receives between 3–5 metres of rain annually.

Acacia melanoxylon have been interplanted with existing totara along the riverbanks, which are very effectively screening any remaining flood debris. The extensive planting of all the waterways and stream edges is of huge benefit in controlling river and stream erosion and creating habitats for fish and bird life.

The Pomeroy's are currently protecting areas of existing podocarp forest, retiring unproductive hillsides, removing wildling pines and fencing in preparation for a busy winter planting season. On the day we visited, their very contented dairy cows were lying about chewing the cud. The cows, the environment and the landscape have all benefited from the sheer hard work and vision that the Pomeroy's continue to develop in their special part of New Zealand.



AMBERGLEN FARM



Newly fenced podocarps and stream edges ready for planting.



Well fenced deciduous shade for dairy cows.



Stream edge riparian plantings three years old.



“ We are very proud to share our story, and hope it gives other people the inspiration to do something similar in their little pocket of the world... If we all strive to do some small thing towards the environment, we will succeed in making things happen in a big way to save our planet. ”

AMBERGLEN FARM

I arrived in Bainham, near Collingwood, in 1978, fresh from the parched plains of Canterbury, which were void of any significant native trees. I came to the paradise of Bainham, with beautiful big kahikatea and totara, where it seemed you just had to leave a bit of land and native seedlings would pop up. I threw myself into helping the native trees to survive, cutting back barberries along the roadside so that podocarps had a chance of growing.

I set myself a project each winter, and learnt to fence off a lot of our steep hillsides to let them regenerate on their own. I stubbornly maintained my objective of creating a beautiful farm, with deciduous trees intermingled with natives and grassy sheltered paddocks for the cows alongside the spectacular Aorere River.

After 30 years of fencing off bush and planting, the farm now looks like my vision, with a good balance of sheltered paddocks and regenerating bush. It was of course essential to be profitable on the farm, so that we could afford to buy the plants. Every year I would buy a few trees from Appletons Nursery, and really look after them so that they flourished. We had to make chicken-wire frames to protect the young trees from the hares, and those frames are still used today. About five years ago Michael decided to undertake some major flax planting. Using the tractor, he pulled out the flax I had originally planted and chopped them up into smaller plants with an axe and sharp spade. Then with the help of a digger he planted them along the streams, and also organised a group of planters to do some riparian planting on our dairy farm at Hickmott's Road. We also got rid of a lot of willows and replaced them with flax. When there were no more big flax plants to split up, he bought more from Appletons Nursery, as well as some toetoe and cabbage trees for a contrast. Those areas are now

starting to look good – it's said that the first year a flax sleeps, the second year it creeps and the third year it leaps. Michael realised how important it is to mark the young plants with a brightly coloured stake, so he had the staff paint bamboo stakes bright blue and pink, and made some square stakes for the cabbage trees. If we didn't have them all marked we would lose too many, because the Muehlenbeckia australis here is very invasive and just strangles the young plants.

A spin-off that I hadn't envisaged in the beginning is that we now have many pukeko living in those swampy flaxed areas and making the most of the irrigation system, ducking in and out of the k-lines. Weka don't mix with the pukeko, but stick to the lovely old hawthorn and barberry hedges intermingled with wild plum trees, which make a fine sight in springtime, looking like the English countryside. Dozens of tui and a few bellbirds regularly visit the flax flowers, extracting the nectar from each little flower. I often wonder what they survive on when the flowers have finished.

Our water quality has improved with all this planting, and we've taken e-coli readings in one stream which drop as it flows through our riparian area. Many of our small streams are an important breeding ground for the kokopu, which are part of the whitebait cycle. These buffer areas are soaking up any fertiliser runoff which would otherwise pollute the creek and the plants which overhang it, providing shade and keeping the water temperature cool for the fish life.

We are very proud to share our story, and hope it gives other people the inspiration to do something similar in their little pocket of the world. Last year I visited the Eden Project in England, which brought home to me how plants keep us alive on so many levels. If we all strive to do some small thing towards the environment, we will succeed in making things happen in a big way to save our planet.

– Kerryann Pomeroy