Restore Native
Trees for the land, birds and the people

Planning your native planting project

E-book

- Where do we start?
- What's the process?
- Is there funding support?
- How do we get the best value for our money?
- How do we build the best forest possible?
- How can you help us get the best solutions?

All of these questions answered... and more!

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About us

At Restore Native, we make native planting simple, affordable, and effective.

Our Waikato nursery produces more than a million hardy natives each year, with species and sizes to suit every site and budget.

We supply and deliver plants across the North Island, and for Waikato and Bay of Plenty landowners we offer a complete restoration service — from on-site planning and drone mapping to spraying, plant supply, planting, maintenance, and releasing.

We can also help you navigate the best funding support available for your project.

Whether you're sourcing plants only or want full project delivery, we'll help you get the right tree in the right place.

WATCH: About us

Our Mission

We're on a mission to restore unproductive farmland into thriving, diverse native forests — bringing back biodiversity, birdsong, and long-term resilience.

WATCH: Our Mission

Restore Native

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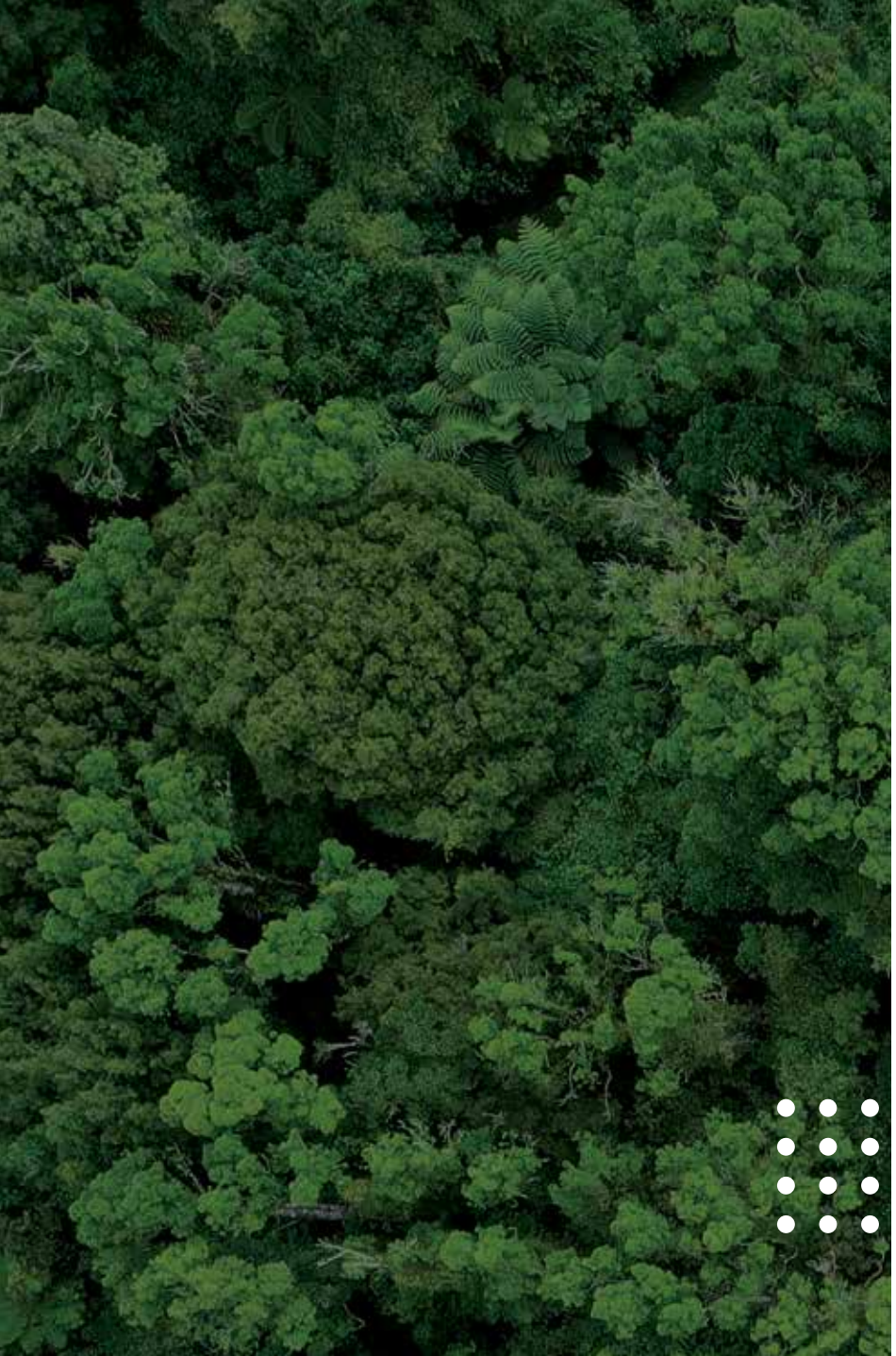
What's involved in creating a Native Forest

1. Site Identification
2. Planning
3. Co-funding
4. Site Preparation & Weed Control
5. Pre-Spray
6. Choosing plant size and grade
7. The importance of species selection
8. Planting Technique
9. Planting Density
10. Spring Releasing Timing & How To
11. Enrichment Planting
12. Pest Pressure
13. Final Checks



1 Site Identification

Every successful project starts with understanding your site and your “why.”

What’s your goal?

- Beautification
- Water quality improvement
- Erosion control
- Biodiversity restoration

We’ll help you assess your land, understand its natural characteristics, and identify where planting will have the greatest impact.

2 Planning

Good planning builds great forests.

We combine drone mapping, species selection, and local knowledge to design a plan that fits your land, goals, and budget.

Planting approach

To establish a native forest, we start by planting colonising species — the hardy, fast-growing pioneers like mānuka, kānuka, akeake, and karamū.

These first species handle open, exposed conditions and quickly create shade and shelter, allowing long-lived canopy species — such as kāhikatea, tōtara, rimu and rewarewa — to come through underneath.

Over time, those slower species rise up through the cover, forming a stable, mature forest. That's why we plant the pioneers first — to set the stage for everything that follows.

WATCH: How we use drone mapping to ensure accurate planning

Key planning considerations

- **Right tree, right place:** match species to soil and moisture.
- **Species mix:** balance pioneers with longer-lived canopy and fruiting trees.
- **Plant density:** decide spacing to achieve canopy closure within budget.
- **Plant size:** choose grades suited to site exposure and weed pressure.
- **Co-funding:** explore options early — we can help connect you to the best funding options.

3 Co-funding support for your native planting project

We'll help you understand what funding options are out there — and assist to get your project funding-ready.

We work with councils, dairy companies, and other funding partners to connect you with the best support available for your project.
Restore Native can help you plan, cost, and prepare your project so you're ready to apply.

We can help you:

- Prepare a planting plan and quote that meet funder requirements
- Identify the co-funders most relevant to your location or farm type
- Connect you directly with those programmes when your plan is ready

CONVOLVULUS

BLACKBERRY

GORSE

JAPANESE HONEYSUCKLE

4 Site Preparation - Controlling Weeds Before You Plant

Strong preparation is the foundation of success and a crucial step in allowing young natives to establish strong roots and thrive.

Weeds such as blackberry, gorse, convolvulus, and Japanese honeysuckle are aggressive competitors for light and nutrients.

Summer is the key time to control weeds — it's when you'll get the greatest impact. They need to be controlled before planting — once natives are in the ground, your herbicide options are limited.

Getting on top of weeds early saves significant time and cost later.

We can help design and implement your preparation plan, including on-site spraying if needed.

Always follow product labels and local environmental guidelines.

5 Pre-spraying

Pre-spraying removes competing grass and weeds, giving native plants a better chance to establish and reducing future weed control efforts.

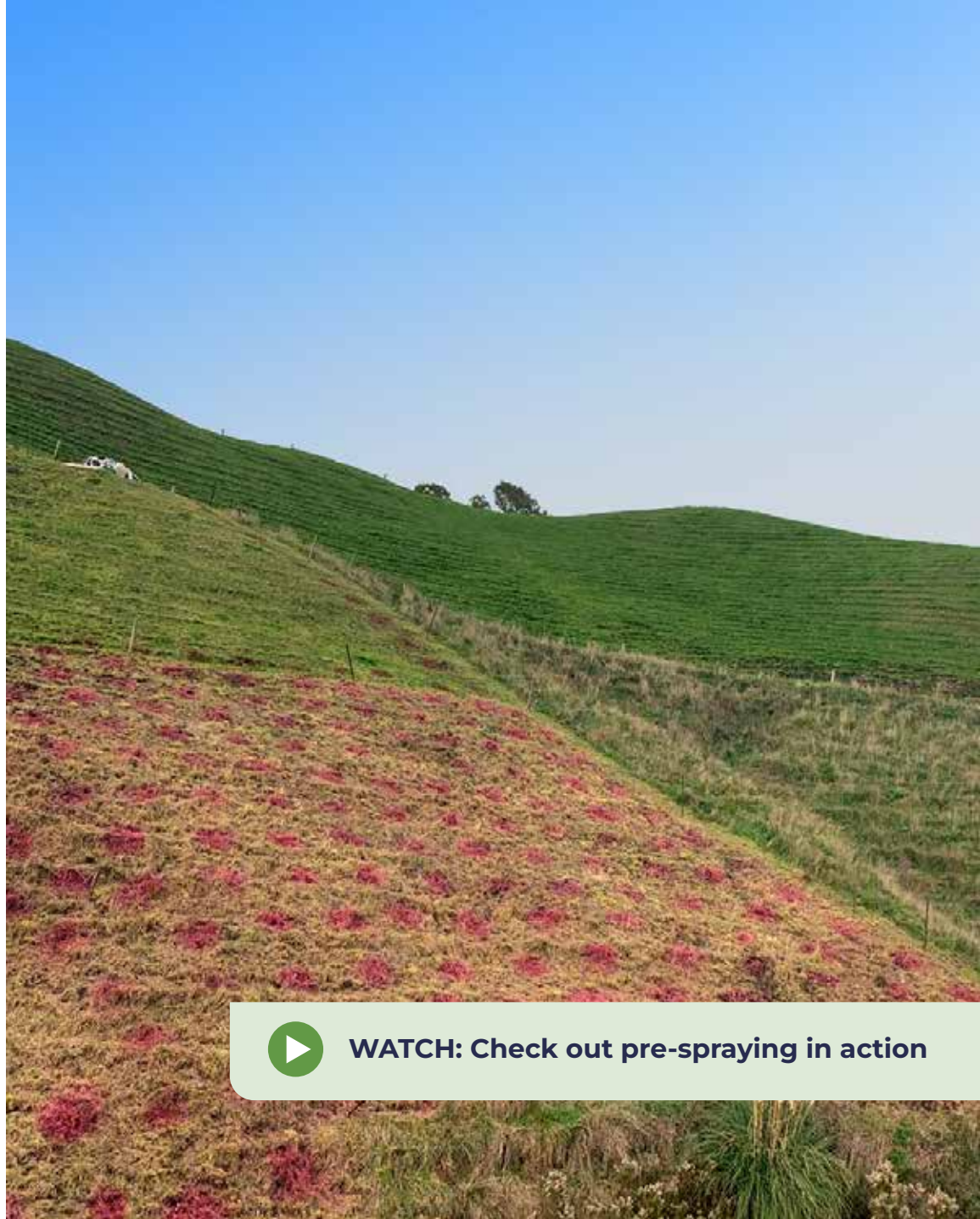
Our process is:

- Pre-spraying six to eight weeks before planting
- Using Glyphosate for broad-spectrum control
- Plus a long-acting pre-emergent herbicide such as Turb (Terbuthylazine) for ongoing suppression.

Technique

- Spot-spray circles about 700–750 mm wide to create clean, competition-free soil zones.
- Avoid brushkiller products — their residual effect can damage natives.

Once the pre-spray is complete, your site is ready for planting.



6 Choosing plant size and grade

In a perfect world, we'd plant fully grown native trees and have an instant forest overnight.

In the real world, it's all about balance — finding what's practical and cost-effective for your project.

At Restore Native, we don't believe there's a single "right" size — every grade has its place.

Smaller plants can establish quickly and cost less to plant at scale, while larger grades can provide an instant impact or thrive in more competitive environments.

The key is matching the size to your site, budget, and long-term goals.

Ordering in advance helps secure the right species and grades for your site — and we're always happy to help with tailored advice

We supply and plant in three grades.

Each site and project is different, so our advice is tailored to help you choose the plant size that will establish best for your conditions.

VIEW: Our full plant range

7 The importance of species selection

Choosing the right native species isn't just about picking what you like — it's about matching plants to the conditions where they'll naturally thrive, so your site grows into a healthy, self-sustaining native ecosystem.

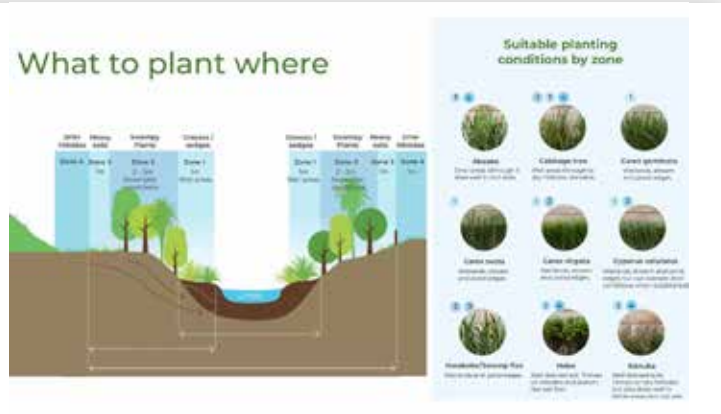
Each site needs its own mix — moisture-loving species for the wetter spots, hardy colonisers for drier slopes.

And on planting day, layout matters.

Group wetland species through the centre, then use faster-growing colonisers around the edges to provide natural shelter — just like a regenerating forest would.

Our expert team knows what works where — and we'll help you get the right species in the right place for long-term success.

VIEW: Our What to Plant Where Guide



8 Planting Technique

We're often asked whether to use spades or augers — there is no single right answer and often comes down to the preferences of each person

Spade Planting

- More accessible (a spade is something everyone has in the garden shed)
- Can be faster when you're planting smaller grade plants

WATCH: Spade planting technique

Auger Planting

- Can be easier and in most cases faster
- Loosens more soil around the area where the plant goes in which makes the initial root growth a bit easier

WATCH: Auger planting technique

No matter the method, plant firmly at the right depth and eliminate air pockets.

9 Why Plant Density Matters

Planting density determines how quickly your forest establishes

- If you're budget-conscious but want a healthy forest, plant at 2 m spacing (≈ 2,500 plants/ha) — you'll get canopy closure (trees touching) in 5–6 years
- For riparian zones or where you want strong visual impact, go closer at 1.5 m (≈ 4,500 plants/ha) to achieve closure in around 3 years
- Once the canopy closes, weeds are shaded out and nature begins to take over

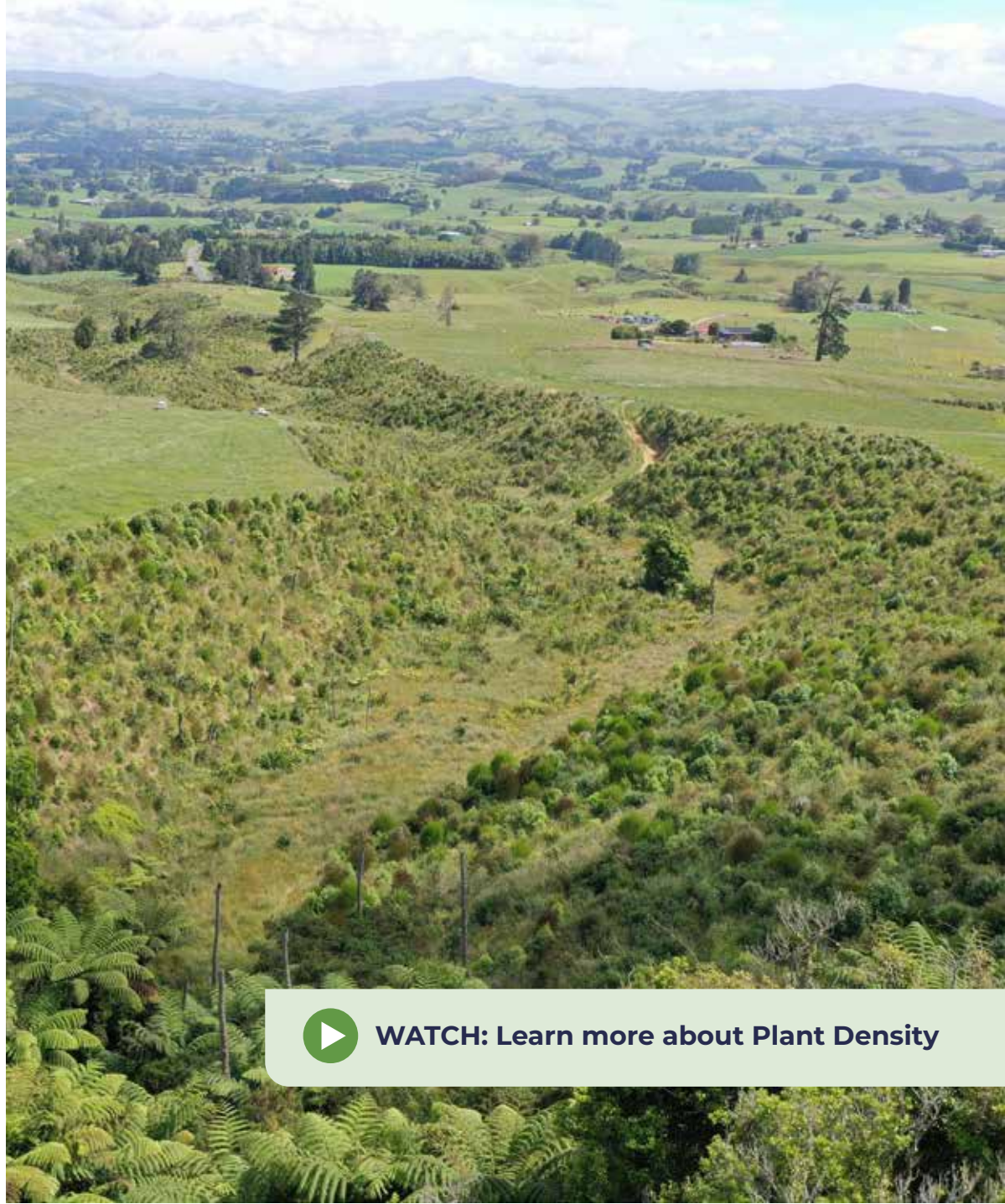
Spacing tips

- The closer your plants are, the faster the forest establishes.
- Native plants thrive when surrounded by their "friends."

Closer spacing delivers:

- Faster canopy formation
- Healthier, supportive growth
- Reduced weed incursion

Wider spacing takes longer to close and invites more weeds — so if budget allows, plant closer.



The right care at the right time is the difference between and failing and thriving

10

Spring Releasing — keeping young trees ahead of competition

Releasing ensures your young plants stay ahead of competing regrowth

Grass and weeds grow fast in spring, competing fiercely for sunlight, water, and nutrients. Left unchecked, they can smother even the healthiest planting.

- Aim for when regrowth is approx halfway up the tree
- Spray releasing is usually most efficient and our recommended approach
- If weeds or grass have overtopped plants, start with manual clearing first
- One well-timed spring spray release is often sufficient, although this can vary by site
- On fertile sites or in growth seasons, additional releasing may be required — we can assist with that as needed
- Vigorous or slow-establishing areas may also benefit from a light follow-up release
- On-going monitoring of your site is key

Some sites require more maintenance than others.

As part of our full-service commitment, we'll ensure your plants get the best care.

IDEAL TIMING:
Aim for when the regrowth is approximately halfway up the tree

How to manually release

- Carefully peel away the grass and weeds around the tree
- Stomp down any remaining weeds to keep them from growing back immediately.

Follow up with a spray release for long-term results.

WATCH: How to manually release

How to spray release

Spray carefully:

- Use glyphosate herbicide in a targeted 500mm arc around each tree to cover the competition zone
- Avoid hitting the tree itself. You don't need to spray every blade of grass

Work safely:

- Spray only in calm, dry conditions.
- Use a shield/low pressure to reduce drift, wear PPE, and keep buffer zones near waterways and sensitive natives.

WATCH: How to Spray Release

11 Enrichment Planting — Turning Shelter into Forest

Once your early shelter trees are established it's time to add diversity.

Enrichment planting introduces fruiting, flowering, and canopy species that feed wildlife and create long-term forest structure.

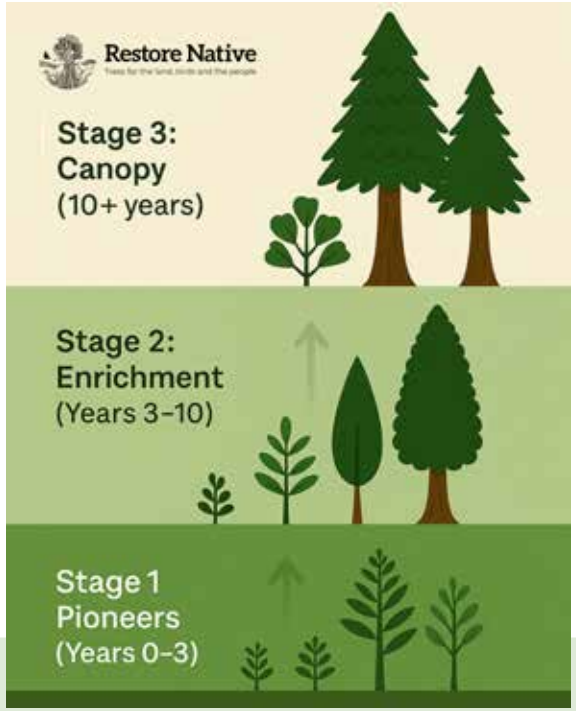
Shelter first, then diversity, then abundance

When we plant, we aim for around 90% survival — though this can vary by site.

Infilling is a great opportunity to add enrichment trees that boost structure and biodiversity.

Weed control: Stay on top of it in year one — light, regular maintenance beats heavy recovery work later.

WATCH: More about Enrichment Planting



Key species:

- **Mānuka & Kānuka** essential early shelter species
- **Rewarewa** nectar source for tūī and bellbird
- **Tōtara** hardy, fruiting canopy species providing nesting habitat
- **Kāhikatea** all emergent tree adding height, shade, and seasonal fruit
- **Harakeke (flax)** important spring nectar source attracting birds and insects

12 Pest Pressure

A range of pests can all affect plant survival. It's important to identifc to your site and plan accordingly.

For most properties, some well timed spot-light shooting, will be sufficient to suppress the number of browsing animals to a level that will allow for successful plant establishment.

However if not, a repellant (e.g Plant-Skydd) can be useful — spray it on plants during winter when rabbits are most active. Over time, rabbit pressure eases, but larger pests can still browse young trees.

As your forest matures and begins to fruit, you may see an increase in rats and possums.

At that stage, targeted pest control can help improve your biodiversity outcomes.

13 Final checks

Once your planting is established there are some important things to note:

- **Enrichment opportunities** what's next for diversity and canopy development
- **Weed incursions** address early before they spread
- **Pest management** monitor and adapt as the site matures
- **Survival and infill** replace losses and add higher-value species
- **Healthy maintenance** keeps your restoration on track for decades to come

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Ready to plan your own project?

We can help with every stage — from plant supply-only within the North Island and complete restoration delivery across Waikato & Bay of Plenty.

Get in touch with Adam to talk through your project or book a no-obligation on-site consultation.

Adam is a passionate conservationist, farmer, and founder of Restore Native.

Through Restore Native, he's helped thousands of landowners turn unproductive land into thriving native forests. His approach is practical and grounded — blending deep local knowledge with a firm belief that productive farming and ecological restoration can work hand in hand.

In 2023, Adam received national recognition at the Primary Industries New Zealand Awards, winning the Kaitiakitanga / Guardianship & Conservation Award. He also founded the Te Miro Kiwi Project, a community-driven effort to return kiwi to the local bush.

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