



MAARA KAI INITIATIVE UPDATE

What did you achieve with the funding and how do you know the event or activity was successful?

Historic Fruit Trees

- The Historic Fruit Trees are Heritage Trees that were originally planted by tupuna of Ngāti Hāua. We have tried to preserve the trees and center them within the maara.
- Prior to commencing this kaupapa, the trees were covered in black berry and other weeds/exotic plants. These have now been removed, with the area around the trees seeded with grass and fenced off. The Trees have also had a prune.
- The health of the trees has significantly improved, with the trees now fruiting larger pears and in higher quantities. The regrowth has also been substantially higher.
- Because of the historic nature of these trees, we have been using them as a central point in our Maara classroom initiative, provide whānau with an insight into the history of this whenua and the food stocks that were grown here by our people.
- We just started harvesting and distributing the pears to whānau. We also have seeds from the fruit to plant another few pear trees as well. The aim is to provide these seeds to other whanau to also grown their own at home, bringing to life an extensive intergenerational food source.
- We've started to plant rootstock fruit and apple trees to form a base for future grafting as well as broadening the orchard.



Summer 2024



Mid-2024



November 2024



February 2025



December 2024



February 2025



February 2025

What did you achieve with the funding and how do you know the event or activity was successful?

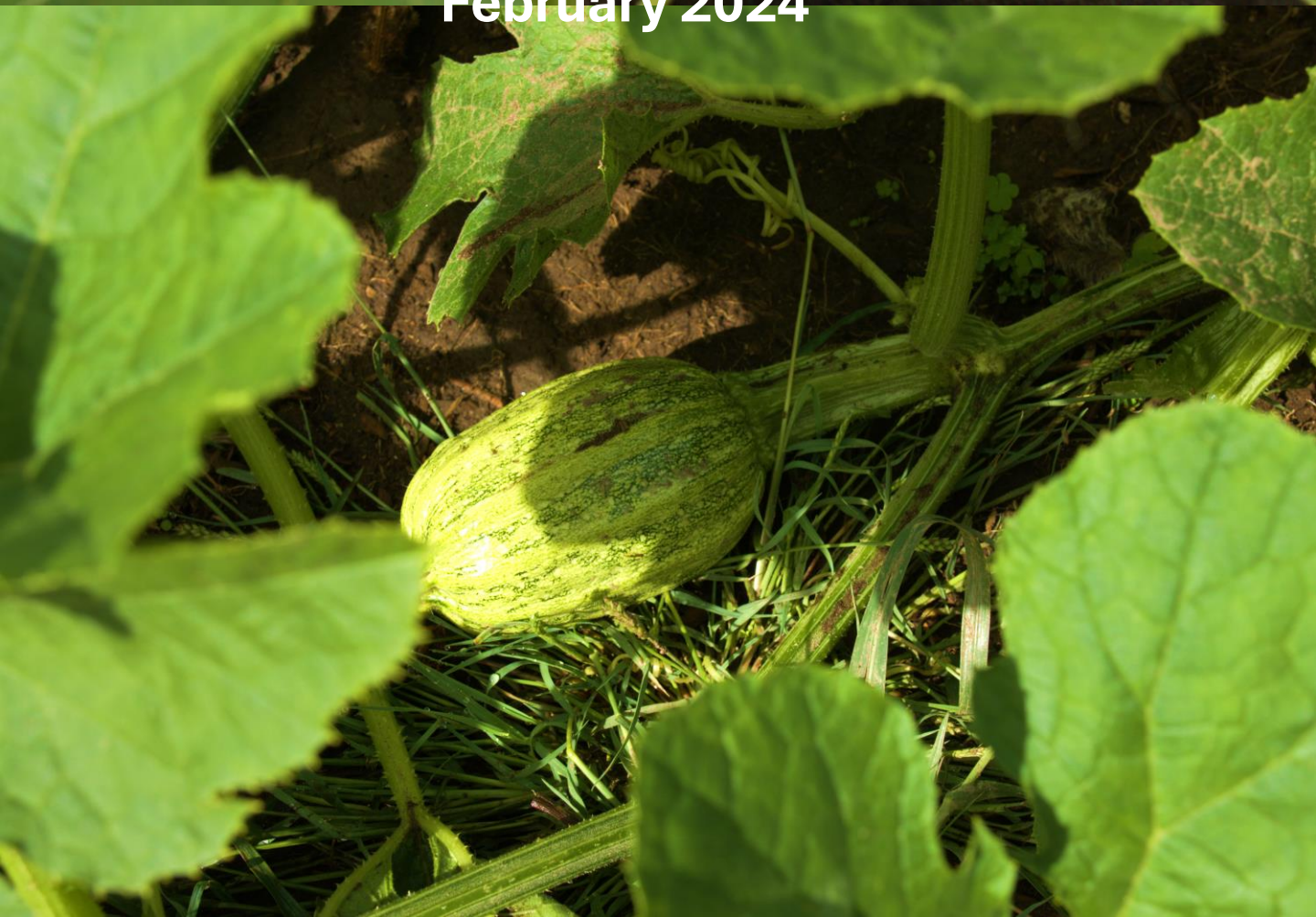
Smaller Maara Area

- The maara kai areas have been progressed in two parts. Part 1 is the smaller maara, which is discussed below. Part 2 is the larger maara area that is being developed and is discussed later on. The smaller maara area was once an old sheep yard. This was overgrown, full of rubbish and covered in rock. We've removed all this and cleaned it. After testing the soil and preparing it for planting, we implemented a small maara. This has been used as an educational facility with rangatahi.
- We've also used the kai grown for wānanga and other iwi/marae initiatives.
- An important part of this whole kaupapa was making sure we could grow kai in this particular environment. We knew that our tupuna once had gardens here, but the knowledge they had has some what been misplaced. The key issue for us to overcome was growing in clay type soil. The small maara has provided a space to test our skills, which we are now confident we have sufficient grasp of to replicate in the larger maara area.
- This confined smaller maara area is producing a substantial amount of kai for distribution. That said, it remains a unique maara because of the different approach required to garden in clay soil. The kamokamo and pumpkin have taken off in this area.





February 2024





February 2024



What did you achieve with the funding and how do you know the event or activity was successful?

Large Maara Area

- The maara kai areas have been progressed in two parts. Part 1 is the smaller maara, which is discussed above. Part 2 is the larger maara area that is being developed. This area was just grass, with some exotic plants, weeds and black berry growing in the area. The boundary fence line was also deteriorating and similar plants growing over the fence, including exotic trees, that were causing unnecessary shading.
- We engaged with the neighboring landowner to undertake clearance works and upgrading the fence. The area has also been turned over and is ready for planting. We plan on implementing 10 raised garden beds which will be used for engaging our kaumatua in gardening practices that also accommodates their mobility needs.
- Some composting, soil treatment and preparation has occurred with more planned over the summer. The whole area is now fully fenced and is protected from rats, cats and rabbits. A parking area has also been installed, with the culvert cleaned out so the area no longer floods.
- Planting took place over the summer (December-January) with whānau assisting and learning “on the tools”. The plants have provided three main harvests already and these have been provided for kaupapa (ratification of settlement hui, and education wānanga).
- We’ve had a mix of pakeke and rangatahi come through to learn and participate in the planting/harvesting aswel.



Summer 2024



Mid 2024



November 2024





December 2024

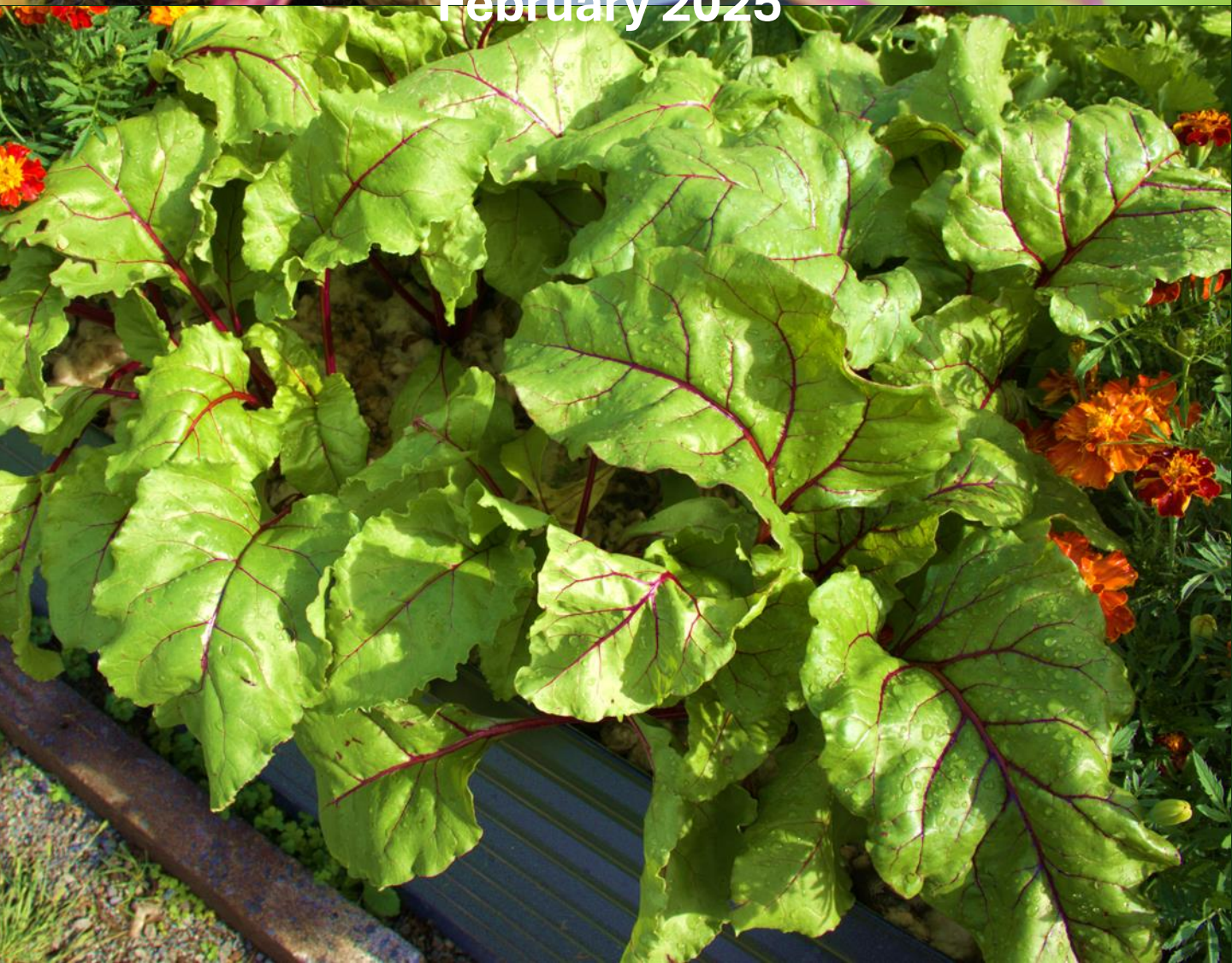


February 2025





February 2025





February 2025





February 2025



Other Mahi

- We purchased a container shed that now provides the necessary storage for equipment and other resources at the maara site. The container can be relocated if required going forward.
- We have now planted rootstock plants. We have also have aspirations to plant native trees along the riparian edge.
- We have had kaumatua and pakeke engagement in the maara, utilizing the raised garden beds in a way that accommodates their mobility needs. The beds can also be moved and relocated if required going forward.
- We have started engagement with regional council and Mouri Turoa about riparian fencing for the entire block, so that sheep can be purchased and farmed here.
- We are looking into a substantiable toilet to install.
- A big focus over the summer is our “MAARA CLASSROOM” initiative, which is aimed at bring in our rangatahi, tamariki and pakeke to teach home maara skills that can be teansferred directly back to their home situations. This has been a huge success with over 9 whānau groups engaged (25-30 people).







How did the funding benefit whānau, hapū and iwi?

- As you can see from the photo's, the development of traditional lands (lands that once held large maara kai for the iwi) has been significantly beneficial in terms of reestablishing Ahi Ka on this particular piece of whenua. Notably, the works have provided a setting for the iwi to hold kaupapa/wananga related to maara kai and independence around kai sovereignty. The establishment of the maara kai has allowed our community projects, which focuses on education whaanau about maara kai through kohanga and home mediums, to have a base for teaching and delivering education.
- This has also enabled the iwi to develop its traditional kai growing practices and relearning the intricate details of the maramataka. The benefits of this have been numerous, but we are yet to see the true benefit as the program expands.
- To date, the establishment of the maara infrastructure has allowed planning for 2025 to include extended participant numbers. We are now confident in our ability to deliver on this and grow the maara area to also involve animals (at some stage).

What learnings, challenges and/or opportunities arose as a result of your project?

- There were no challenges save for the requirement to manage the funding available to achieve a lot for less. We consider we achieved just that. The opportunities that now arise from the work put in to date are both tangible and intangible. The tangible opportunities is that we have a fully formed maara that is sized to provide kai. The size also makes the programs we have planned for 2025 realistic and achievable (i.e. the Maara Classroom). This means that we can educate and empower our people to grow their own kai while at the same time have a system of support (both in knowledge and people support, and in a place they can obtain kai if they need). Again, this has proved positive.
- The other aspect, is that the whenua we are now growing a maara, was not utilized prior to our taking it over. This has meant that exotic weeds, blackberry and other invasive plants have been removed or are now under control.
- Our big learning was that minimal funding can achieve a lot with flexible planning. We intend on applying that approach as we work to expand the maara going forward and introduce school targeted programs.