New Plymouth growing into City of Giants

By SIMON SMITH

NEW PLYMOUTH is set to become the kauri capital of the world.

As many as 6000 kauri are believed to be growing in New Plymouth — and many of them will soon have a growth spurt, says arboriculture student Cory Smith (26).

With the help of former Pukekura Park curator George Fuller, Mr Smith has spent the last two years measuring 353 notable trees around the city.

In his foreword to Mr Smith's new report, Mr Fuller said: "Vistors will be drawn here specifically to enjoy what 'The City of Giants' has to offer."

Mr Smith said kauri trees grow slowly for the first hundred years, but in the second century of life their trunks have the ability to triple in diameter.

The oldest kauri in New Plymouth was planted around 1895 and was just entering the stage of rapid growth now.

Many people could be credited for the city's large number of kauri, Mr Smith said.

In particular, in the 1940s Fred Cowling donated six acres of his own land, in the town's upper west, to the public, after he had planted 2000 kauri.

Mr Cowling wrote in his diary: "In the days that are to come (this kauri forest) will be one of the greatest scenic attractions of the Southern Hemisphere."
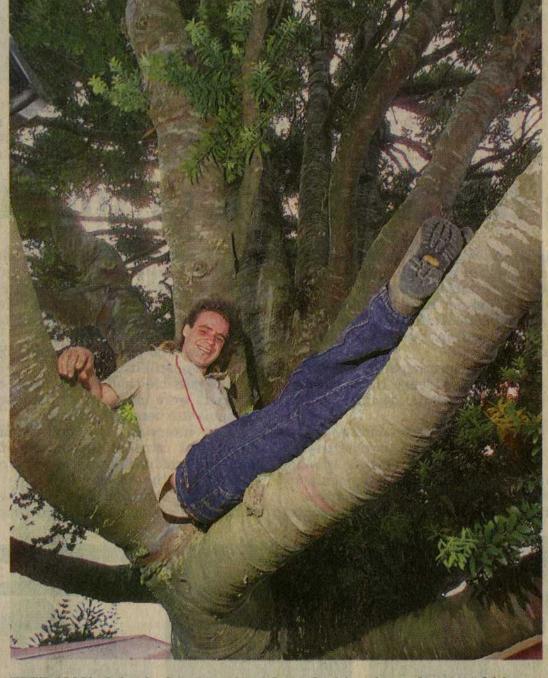
Mr Smith's report updates records on 213 trees originally measured by Bob Burstall about 30 years ago, and notes the human stories that go with the trees.

"I don't want to claim too much credit for my work because I'm just following in other people's footsteps."

He found that New Plymouth had kept more of its historic and notable trees than other parts of New Zealand, especially those growing on private property.

Possible reasons for this were the large number of city parks, dedicated park staff, an active council, and slow population growth.

◻ SIMON SMITH is a Witt journalism student.

TREE MAN: Arboriculture student Cory Smith relaxes in one of his favourite kauri. This Govett Ave tree was planted in 1904 and has the thickest trunk of any kauri in New Plymouth.   Photo: MARK DWYER