

# Victoria University recreates traditional Māori vegetable garden

November 15 2013

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Space is being cleared and prepared for planting behind the University's Māori Studies (Te Kawa a Māui) building.

The project is based on recreating the type of garden Māori tended prior to European contact, with planting scheduled around the Māori calendar.

"To our knowledge this is the first time this has been done in a Māori context in Wellington," says Head of Te Kawa a Māui, Associate

Professor Peter Addis.

"Among other things, we plan to use it as a teaching tool in a number of our classes."

Several varieties of pre-European cultigens are being sourced with the help of the Botanical Society—including yams, taro, gourds and kumara—to ensure the maara kai is as authentic as possible.

Te Kawa a Māui PhD student Philip Best, who is part of the project, is excited about the possibilities for learning and research.

"We talk about the many foods Māori grew prior to European contact, but previously lacked the opportunity to see, feel and taste the foods of the ancestors. This project makes that possible."

A weather station will be set up to monitor temperatures and weather conditions. Soil testing will also be undertaken and University soil scientists will assist with [soil](#) analyses.

The garden will be divided into zones, with different soils and plants, to see what works best.

"We are interested in finding out which traditional Māori cultigens will grow this far south," says Associate Professor Addis.

"Historical records in the Wellington region show some unexpected plants growing successfully here."

Participation in the [project](#) is University-wide, and also includes external groups such as the Department of Conservation and Te Puni Kōkiri.

Provided by Victoria University of Wellington

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