



# Update from Wwoof Headquarters

Wwoof NZ Newsletter  
November 2001

Wwoof NZ  
Andrew and Jane Strange  
PO Box 1172  
Nelson  
New Zealand

Phone or Fax  
0064 3 5449890  
Email: support@wwoof.co.nz  
Web Site: www.wwoof.co.nz

## There's a Wwoofer in the Garden

I have been a Wwoof Host now for about 10 years and for me one of the most frustrating and often disappointing jobs I can get a Wwoofer to do is weed the garden. It is not so bad when your Wwoofer can speak good English and can understand what a weed is, but when they can hardly speak English at all, it sometimes can almost drive you around the bend. Well there I was one morning sitting on the back veranda with my cup of tea looking at the weeds in my vege garden and unlike most vege gardens, mine consisted of about 90% weeds and the other 10% were veges hiding in there somewhere. Even I could hardly see them. And so I was contemplating what would be the best approach to this job;

- A. Open the gate and let the cows in.
- B. Do nothing at all and let the weeds grow bigger.
- C. Let my good, keen Japanese Wwoofer have a go at it.
- D. Poke a stick of dynamite in the middle and hope for the best.

Well, as I said, I was sitting there and all of a sudden the answer came to me, "My bucket of clothes pegs"! So up I jumped, cup of tea in one hand and clothes pegs in the other, and off I went, and very soon my garden had a lot of pink clothes pegs hanging off all the vegetables. It was rather colourful. Well you know it was rather pleasing when I came home later that day, for the first time ever I'd had the garden weeded properly and there was nothing pulled out that should not have been, though I had to laugh when I saw my Japanese Wwoofer struggling to dig with a spade which he was holding around the wrong way.

Well, sometimes we take things for granted like the time I gave the job of digging the potatoes to a young Dutch girl. She thought the idea of the fork was to spear them to pick them up. Later I found every potato had a hole through it. I should have taken her off to the beach with the flounder spear, she would probably have been quite good at it. Another time I gave the job of mowing the lawn to another Japanese boy. I showed him how to start the mower and then I left him to it while I was doing a repair job on my tractor. Then after a while I thought I'd better check up on him because it didn't sound like he had gone very far. So I went around the corner of the house and there he was randomly pushing and pulling the mower in all directions in much the same fashion that most people would use a paint roller. Sometimes you just have to stop and wonder!

Robb Fraser  
Otorohanga

## Hi from Jane and Andrew...

Please find enclosed your copy of the new Wwoof Book which now has 654 Wwoof Hosts, compared to 589 in 2000. Thanks to hosts for getting their renewals and updates back to us during July & August, this helps keep the book up-to-date. The next update is in February if you have

any changes you wish to make between now and then. There was a great response from hosts with photos for their online listing, about 300 were sent in and can be viewed at [www.wwoof.co.nz/members](http://www.wwoof.co.nz/members). You will be asked to enter the following: username: *wwoofer*, password: *7dejsy53or* (this password will change periodically and you will be sent the new one). If you haven't sent in photos but wish to, send them in now and they can be added. The photos have revealed so many amazing places - unique buildings, lush gardens and heaps of happy looking Wwoofers! Remember you don't have to have internet access yourself to have the online listing (don't feel you *need* to have computers etc., it's primarily the Wwoofers who seem to want this service)!

Spring usually sees a rush of activity on the farm - just as well it is also a time when more Wwoofers arrive, full of energy and enthusiasm! Some hosts have commented that winter has been quiet, with only a few inquiries from Wwoofers. We would be interested to hear how the supply and demand situation goes over summer.

There were a few queries regarding safety, insurance etc. for Wwoofers. Whether Wwoofers are your guests or 'workers', the first priority is to ensure your farm is a reasonably safe environment. Secondly, make sure Wwoofers are aware of any hazards and don't put them in situations that tend to be risky (even the innocent job of loading firewood onto a ute (with no keys in) ended up with one Wwoofer rolling off down a hill and through a fence)! The ACC scheme does cover travelers for accidents, so no specific insurance for accidents is needed. Travelers should have their own travel insurance for medical treatment, loss of possessions etc.

Wwoofers with kids. Thanks to those 100 or so hosts who said that they were able to accept Wwoofers with kids. There is no obligation for hosts to accept Wwoofers with kids but we do get a few enquiries from families who wish to stay on organic farms and this is a great opportunity for them. Other hosts were open to having kids but issues such as safety on the farm, limited accommodation etc. made it unsuitable.

A host suggested that Wwoofers should be encouraged to take host's facilities as they are - e.g. long drops and bush baths can be part of the experience (sort of like 'adventure accommodation')! This host had simple facilities but found that the Wwoofers enjoyed their stay (despite not having a high level of comfort and convenience) because of the warm, welcoming atmosphere the host created.

It has been suggested that Wwoofers could have a questionnaire to complete about their Wwoofing experiences. We would prefer that feedback be kept on a more informal, natural level. For example, encouraging Wwoofers to write about their experiences—good and bad. Also, hosts often hear first hand from Wwoofers about their experiences, so please encourage them to send in their comments.

Hosts and Wwoofers often ask, "What's a fair amount of work"? Generally Wwoof is based on half a day's help. For most people this would be about 4-5 hours. As Wwoofers are generally taken in as part of the family, it is reasonable for a Wwoofer to join in with household chores (e.g. cooking the odd meal, helping get lunch ready, doing their own washing etc.). The key is discussing these basic requirements with the Wwoofer on the phone.

### Why GE free?

Put it this way, why does nature only allow breeding to happen between plants and animals of essentially the same species i.e. a sunflower will only pollinate another sunflower, a rabbit will only fertilize another rabbit. Put a rabbit and possum together? It doesn't matter how well they get on, they will never produce offspring! Their genetic material is not compatible. With genetic engineering, a plant or animal has foreign genetic material artificially inserted in with its own genetic material so that the modified organism has new characteristics. Concerns about this include the fact the characteristics of the new organism will have unpredictable effects within the environment (similar to introducing an exotic plant or animal into the environment).

The GE free register is a practical way of demonstrating what is required to protect your farm from artificially engineered organisms. The register simply records the location of your farm on a map. In order to offer protection from GE contamination, an 8km radius (the foraging range of pollen-carrying bees) is drawn around your property in which there should be no GE crops grown. The beauty of the system is that it places the responsibility onto anyone considering growing GE crops to respect your democratic right to have a GE free property.

You can register by phoning (09) 4388649 or at [www.gefreeregister.co.nz](http://www.gefreeregister.co.nz). Donations would be welcomed.

### Vacation Verde

Vacation Verde (Green Vacation) is a re-launch of the accommodation guide printed a few years ago. The purpose of Vacation Verde is to provide a guide for travellers who wish to have wholesome holiday experiences and also to promote the hospitality aspect of the organic industry to the domestic market and also overseas holiday makers. The guide will include people who wish to provide homestays, farmstays, B&B accommodation where organic food is available. Along with organic food, many people are also able to offer mud/straw/earth/recycled non-toxic eco-accommodation as part of the package. The guide will also include eco-excursions such as organic cafés, restaurants, vineyards, olive groves, conservation projects etc. This service will be offered via the internet. Once there is sufficient we will also produce a printed version. Either write to Wwoof for more info or submit your listing at [www.wwoof.co.nz/vv](http://www.wwoof.co.nz/vv)

## Two Conference Sponsorships Offered to Wwoof Hosts

Wwoof is offering to sponsor the registration fees for two hosts (\$140 each) to attend the conference below (plus some travel expenses if from the North Island). If you wish to attend the conference please write a short letter to Wwoof Headquarters (before 31st Dec.) saying why you would like to attend.

7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on  
Nature Farming  
Christchurch Polytechnic  
15-18 January 2002

Nature Farming is an ecologically based approach to sustainability in agriculture and incorporates the use of Effective Microorganisms (EM).

EM Technology will form a large part of the conference and this will be an excellent opportunity to learn of the applications of EM (a multipurpose mixture of beneficial microbes) in crop production, animal production and waste management throughout the world. A hundred overseas scientists, academics and farmers will represent over 30 countries. A special section on New Zealand will show the relevance of this technology and of nature farming in this country.

There will be top keynote speakers from Europe and New Zealand speaking about various aspects of Nature Farming, organic agriculture and EM. The conference is designed to deliver research findings and practical applications in a manner suiting researchers, farmers, NGO's and individuals. It will be a unique opportunity to share in this international experience.

The scientific conference will be based at the Christchurch Polytechnic over 2.5 days. There will also be two half-day field trips. These field trips will feature visits to two of the best examples of commercial organic farms in Canterbury, one of those farms has just won the Lincoln Foundation award for best organic farm in the South Island. This farm has an extensive programme of EM use. The other is a well-known Christchurch organic market garden in Marshlands growing the very best quality organic vegetables. In addition we will visit various projects around the Garden City using this technology including public gardens, composting, and recycling of household waste back to soil.

This conference and the field trips will be a great opportunity to see and hear how EM can be integrated into organic farming systems, community and public gardens, and food and green waste recycling schemes. The interaction with overseas delegates will allow people to compare their systems with those experiences and advances in other countries.

The registration fee is \$140. The registration provides for; conference bag, proceedings, morning and afternoon teas, lunch each day, plus a unique organic feast, at an equally unique venue, two field trips are included. Child-care facilities may be available. Further information can be obtained by emailing: [nznfs@paradise.net.nz](mailto:nznfs@paradise.net.nz) Or visit our website [www.emnz.20m.com](http://www.emnz.20m.com)

