



Lyndale Custom Compost - March 2023

Essen and Beyond

After three “no show” COVID years the premium horticultural showcase IPM Essen returned in 2023.

Custom Mix and KiwiFlora were present with different must-do lists, and joined the very busy throng of horticultural-minded folks catching up with friends and associates plus all the innovations that have taken place since the last show.

There were many, Custom Mix focuses on the latest technology in media and revealed again just how fortunate we are in NZ, to have good a supply of composted bark fines.

Most other countries do not have this wonderful resource available in quantities that are adequate to meet the demand of their horticultural industries.



IPM Essen
Germany 2023

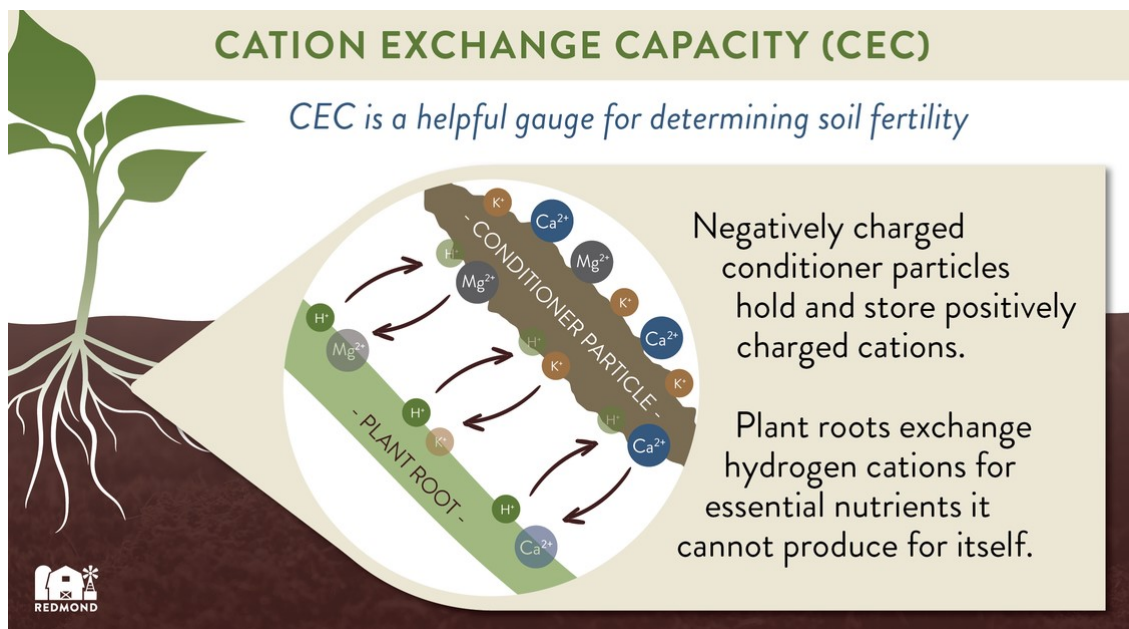
In addition to this advantage, we are blessed with highly regulated peat mining which makes it as close to sustainable as you could get, plus pumice, plus the availability of coco fibre.

Other countries struggle and must resort to wood fibre and other substitutes (not their first choice) that gobble up available nitrogen in a race before it leaches into the run-off water as there is no CEC or Cation Exchange Capacity (the polarity that holds fertilizer to peat) as you find in mixes with even a small percentage of peat.

One of the “finds” of the show was meeting with the company that has achieved a breakthrough in packaging for retail sales of potting mixes. Very exciting.



We are fortunate with resources we have here in NZ.



Vietnam

Sourcing input for potting mixes and plants is a global affair, after the Essen show and catching up with family in Germany, we travelled to Vietnam, for the first time.

WOW, what amazing people and the business possibilities for New Zealand are extensive.

We visited one plant producer that we have an association with that is 150 hectares under cover. However what is extraordinary about Vietnam is the people. Their resilience and resourcefulness knows no bounds.

To understand the people, take to the roads, walk across a busy highway, ride a scooter or drive a car. Quickly you realize that the system is organic and revolves around vehicles and people constantly moving forward into a space in the direction they want to go.



150 Hectares undercover
Fully integrated IPM (Integrated Pest
Management) program.

This means for pedestrians, regardless of if you are crossing a street on a pedestrian crossing or not, the rule is to make your intentions clear, do not hesitate, just walk steadily and the sea of scooters, cars, and trucks will open in front of you and close behind.

Unlike in France and Italy, those well-known centers of Latin passion, we saw no cars or scooters (there are 8 scooters for every one car) with visible signs of damage. We can learn a lot from the Vietnamese on the roads. Being tolerant, not belligerent and understanding that we are all going somewhere and allowing all to simply flow. Amazing and it works.

Meanwhile back in NZ, we need to learn.

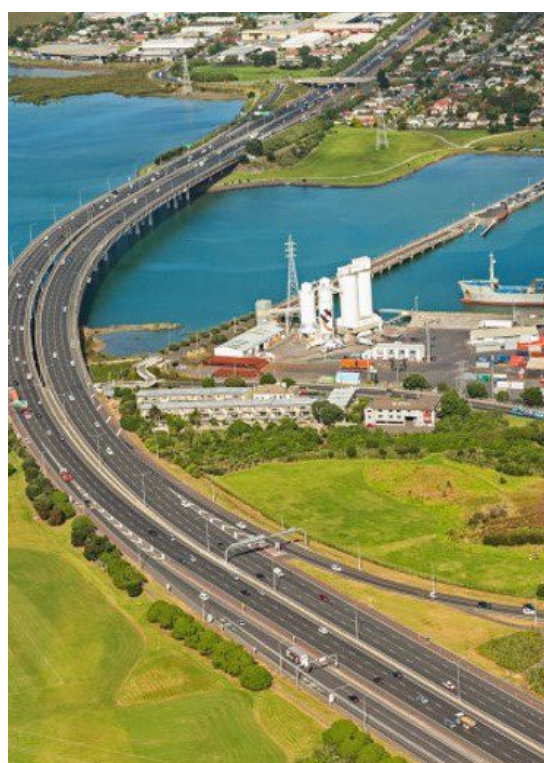
Mayhem and destruction as first the horrendous downpour of 27 January in the larger Auckland /Northland region followed by Cyclone Gabrielle weaving a slow path of mega destruction through the North Island and upper South Island, highlighting in vivid detail how crap our infrastructure and urban location planning is. This means that it is all ahead of us now in the wake of Cyclone Gabby and the Auckland Anniversary storm, some politicians are saying we need more greenery in our cities, so we can't have more density.

Not so; We need both and we can have both.

In Curitiba a city of 1.9 million people in Southern Brazil, they have been



The traffic lights were clearly missing that night in Ho Chi Minh but, metaphorically, they're often abundantly present in complex organisations such as universities.

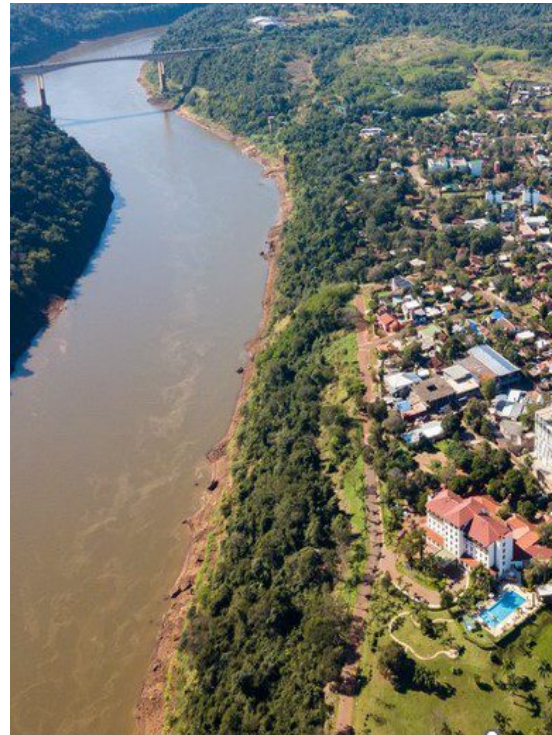


Example of successful infrastructure in Auckland.

remarkably successful at doing just that.

Like Auckland, Curitiba has tripled in size since 1970. But where the growth here has been a mix of massive sprawl and poorly regulated in-fill housing, with an added absurd failure to plan and manage transport needs, Curitiba choose a different path. They planted millions of trees and built 16 public parks and 14 forests inside the urban city limits.

The Iguazu River, which runs through the middle, has maintained its meandering course, with parkland all along its banks. In heavy rains (and they have heavy rain in Brazil) the parks form a floodplain, keeping the water away from buildings and overflow drains.



Significant Iguazu River which runs through the middle of Curitiba.

In the 1980s, Curitiba developed the worlds first bus rapid transport system. Five roads emanate from a central hub, like prongs on a star. Private vehicles have a single lane on each side while buses run both ways down the middle. There is a single cheap bus ticket price, no matter how far you are going.

It works so well that, Curitibaanos use bus transport for 70% of their daily trips. The air is cleaner, carbon emissions are far lower and construction costs are a small fraction of tunneled or elevated light rail. When cars are not so important there is more room on the public land for trees, grass and gardens, swales for stormwater runoff, all the practical benefits and pleasures of a green city.

How did Curitiba do it, when most other cities in South America stuffed themselves full of cars?



70% of people use bus transport in Curitiba.

Two Factors. First, they built up, not out. Suburban sprawl would have undermined the whole idea.

Second: great leadership. Curitiba was planned in the 1970s by Jaime Lerner, who then became mayor with the authority to make his ideas work.

Benign dictatorships have a lot going for them. If in doubt take a trip to Singapore.

There is hope for us but we urgently need good strong leadership to make hard calls to be made and a clear plan for the path ahead.

Well, that wraps up another blog.

Kia Kaha

The Custom Mix Team



“
Whatever the goal,
an action plan
creates a
**CLEAR
PATH**
to success.”



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