

Background

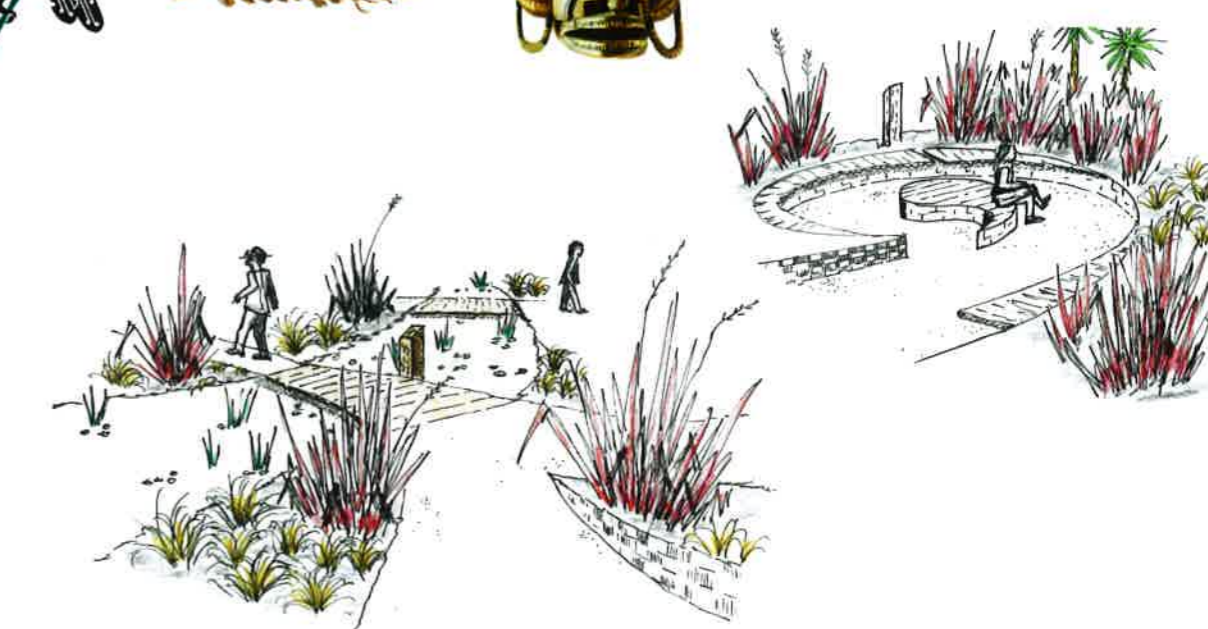
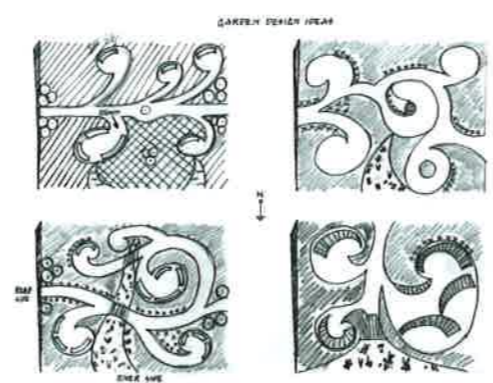
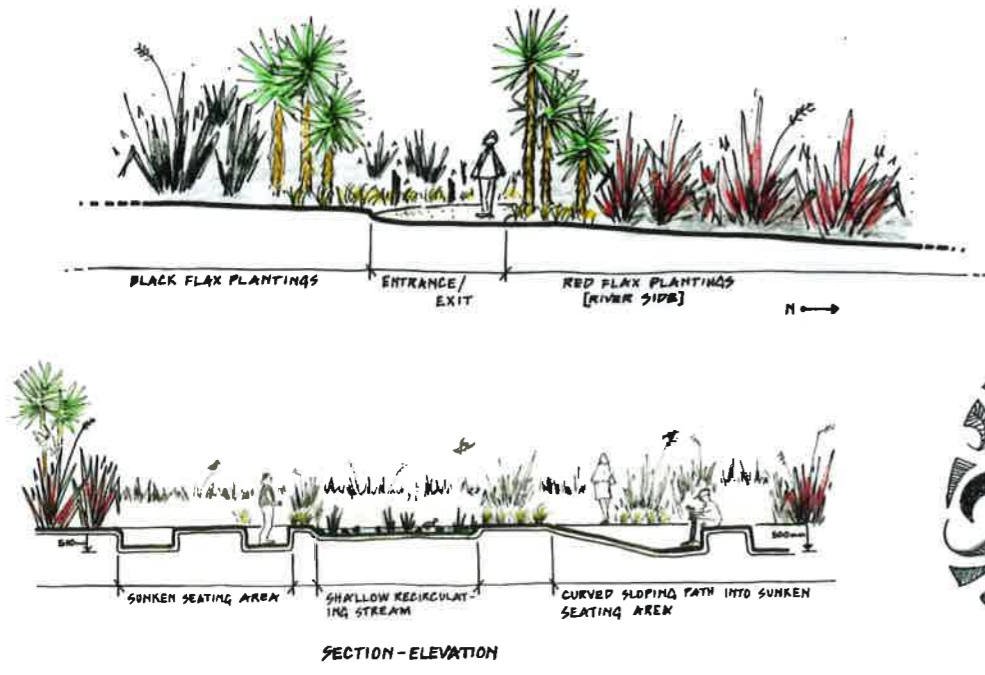
The aim of the 'Places of Tranquillity' project is to gain a deep understanding of the philosophical, spiritual and cultural traditions of the Pacific Nations, and to use the ideas and clues gained from this research in creating a garden design for a Christchurch site that evokes a familiar and tranquil sense of space. The challenge has been to design a relocatable, sustainable garden which is also budget-conscious.

My research revealed that Pacific Nations privilege their families and notions of togetherness. This is a prevalent feature throughout Polynesian and Maori culture. Initially I thought a tranquil garden might offer small intimate quiet spaces for individuals or couples to enjoy private time to reflect, to meditate. However, upon deeper investigation into Pacific cultures, I sensed that tranquillity is not necessarily about peace and quiet, rather it's about welcoming, togetherness, celebration and openness.

My garden design grew out of these ideals and the idea of journeys, past, current and future. Like European settlers, our Maori emigrated here from faraway lands. The conditions they faced upon arrival were to some degree inhospitable or unforgiving – the climate and terrain, for example. Maori adapted to their new surroundings, and quickly learned to utilise native plants such as flax (harakeke) in place of coconut fronds, in multiple ways. I wanted my design to incorporate various paths (reflecting the different journeys they'd undertaken), which arrived in open and welcoming common ground. I also wanted these routes to be demarcated by posts signalling Maori's history and progress, and the plants which ensured their livelihood – as fishers, hunters, gardeners and artisans. Maori proverbs which came to mind included: Toitu he whenua, whatungarongaro he tangata (The land is permanent, man disappears) and Kia mau ki to Maoritanga (Hold fast to your culture).

Seasonal activities included gardening, fishing and the hunting of birds. Main tasks were separated for men and women, but there were also a lot of group activities involving food gathering and food cultivation, and warfare. Art was and is a prominent part of the culture as seen in the carving of houses, canoes, weapons, and other items of high status. The people also wore highly decorative personal ornaments, and people of rank often had their skin marked with extensive Tā moko, similar to tattooing.

The collage includes: a logo with 'TOP' and 'TR' in red and white; a Maori carving of a figure; a traditional Maori mask; a woven basket; a Maori tattoo; a Maori house; a Maori canoe; a Maori bird; and a Maori mask with a feathered headdress.



Design Description

My interpretation of the challenge is represented in my sketches, diagrams and images displayed in this project. I felt inspired to create accommodating pocket areas within the garden that offer a tranquil space for individuals, couples or groups, while also allowing for interaction and socialising.

Drawing on my research into the Pacific, I found a range of inspirational cues that I have used in my design. Sustainability was a key factor in selecting my materials which can be sourced locally and easily. Plants are all native plants are predominantly low profile (under 2 meters) in and around the garden area, save for small groupings of cabbage trees at the entrance/exits and in the south west corner. My reason for this was to give a sense of openness and togetherness, allowing all who visit to enjoy partially obstructed views toward other parts of the garden when seated. Pacific countries are passionate about their culture, large gatherings are not uncommon where family and friends get together for any occasion worth observing. This sense of togetherness is in part what I'm conveying in my design.

The use of red and black flax varieties (predominant colours seen in Maori designs) coupled with sunken seating areas provide shelter from wind, whilst also attracting native and exotic birds who will feed from the flowers. Flax bushes and cabbage trees have a calming audible rustle when blowing in the wind, a sound that imparts a sense of tranquillity and peace.

The use of sand and crushed shell in the pathways symbolises the ocean and coastal areas that surround all Pacific countries. The ocean is a rich source of food and income for many Pacific countries and a key ingredient in their culture.

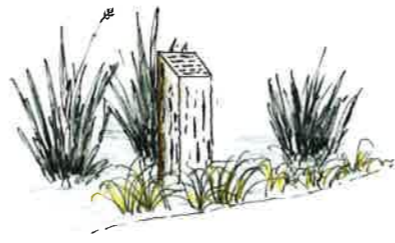
The wooden sleeper posts placed along the pathways will be inscribed with Maori proverbs, offering messages of encouragement and strength, giving visitors a chance to reflect on words that hold meaning and truth.

The sunken seating areas are symbolic of wooden carvings, not only from their shape but also the way they carve into the earth and give depth to the garden, providing protection from wind, noise and outside distractions.

I included a stream in the centre of the garden which symbolises calm and tranquillity. Maori view rivers and streams with respect, due to certain qualities placed on them. Rivers are also said to be protected by the *Atua* (God). Water also instils a sense of peace, enriching the experience within the garden. The bridges are representative of the oceans crossed by Maori when in search of new land and their transition made hundreds of years ago.

If my garden is successful, I would like to honour the occasion during the garden's construction, provided it coincides with Matariki (Maori New Year). Matariki occurs around the shortest day of the year when a cluster of seven stars, known as the Pleiades star cluster, can be observed. The brighter the stars, the more productive the coming years harvest will be. I see this as being symbolic toward Christchurch's rebuild and how as a community, we can all benefit from a productive future.

It is the first new moon after Matariki that officially signals the Maori New Year (June 21st, 2012). Celebrating Matariki by planting a tree, or several, is a great way for Maori to share their stories and culture with the wider community as well as officially marking the occasion. Nowadays, Matariki is seen as an important time to celebrate the earth, and show respect for the land on which we live.



LEGEND

-  BLACK FLAX
-  RED FLAX
-  CABBAGE TREE
-  TUSSOCK GRASS
-  FLAT BRIDGE
(RECYCLED TIMBERS)
-  RECIRCULATING
STREAM
-  SLEEPER POSTS WITH
MAORI PROVERBS
-  INSPIRED SHAPED SEATING

Wooden sleeper poles will be placed along the central path, each will have inscribed a Maori proverb written in Te Reo and English. For example, *Toitu he whenua, whatungarongaro he tangata* (The land is permanent, man disappears) and *Kia mau ki to Maoritanga* (Hold fast to your culture)

A shallow stream that will recirculate water, the gently slope will allow the water to slowly meander down to the end catchment area then will be pumped back to the start. (If the garden goes permanent then a more permanent solution will be employed for this feature)

Pathways will be laid with a mixture of sand and crushed shell. This combination of materials will give a tactile feel under foot and also provide an audible sensation reminiscent of walking on a coastal path or beach.

