

### Free start up vegetable gardens to reconnect community

Over one hundred families across West Auckland received free start up vegetable gardens and took part in a two day workshop on how to grow their own food and compost as part of My Backyard Garden Project (MBGP).

In the lead up to the workshop, local community garden coordinators and volunteers built and installed the gardens, and delivered compost bins to each of the locations receiving a garden. Compost bins, wood and soil for the gardens are all donated and recycled to ensure there was no cost to families.

Sixteen of the gardens were installed at Hoani Waititi Marae. Whanau members attended the workshops then held a working bee to start the beginnings of a new focus on sustainable living and eating healthy. Plans are also for the Whanau members also build raised garden beds for elders. Orchards, chickens and pigs are also in the plans for the Marae and members from the nearby Kura and Kohanga Reo are also involved.

The sixteen garden beds were installed using Maramataka (Maori lunar calendar) to show families how the times and dates for planting and harvesting can be guided by cycles of the moon. Healthy Families Waitakere connected Hoani Waititi Marae with MBGP after learning about their new focus on sustainable living.

MBGP aims to increase the number of gardens in family's backyards to encourage growing and cooking more vegetables. Gardens were also installed in primary schools and various community group houses.

Many organisations are supporting this initiative including Z Petrol Station Henderson, Mitre 10 Mega Henderson, Massey Community Men's Shed, Idea Services, Ranui Community Garden, Waitakere Rotary, Kelston Community Hub, Massey Matters, Triangle Park Community Garden, Club Physical Te Atatu, Compost Collective, Auckland Council supporting Love Food Hate Waste, Fresh Choice Ranui, Sport Waitakere and Healthy Families Waitakere.

**Photo L – R Whanau member with tamariki planting seedlings in the new garden, the layout of the sixteen garden beds at Hoani Waititi Marae**

