

# Bridal veils of secrecy lifted at kindergarten

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Listen, do you want to know a secret? Along with news about Bride of the Year 2010, there's an exciting new secret being unveiled at Somerset Kindergarten.

Just over the fence from the kindergarten, there's the Secret Forest. Newly acquired from a neighbour, this small area of native bush is the focus for funds raised from this year's Somerset Kindergarten Bride of the Year.

Entries for the 42nd annual pageant on September 6 have now closed, with a record number of applications from 42 brides. Entrants, their supporters and the public, will be pleased to learn that proceeds from the glamour Regent on Broadway event will be used to develop the Secret Forest bush area now added to the kindergarten.

A growing international trend in education, the aim of cultivating natural bush and forest areas is to encourage children to connect with nature, and to nurture future generations to care for and understand their environment.

The idea came from the Somerset teaching team attending a workshop that looked at natural environments around the world.

"We then initiated contacting the neighbour to see how he felt about selling a piece of his section," explains parent Megan Crawford on behalf of the teaching team. "It was with great excitement that the surveying started [last week], so the end of the purchasing and subdividing process is within the next month.

"Children will be able to fossick and ramble through native trees and shrubs to wonder at insects and birds. We already have tuis that regularly visit the trees in our kindergarten."

Somerset Kindergarten's teaching team have read a number of books and



**NATURE:** Somerset Kindergarten children will be able to enjoy a bush experience in their own back yard.

research papers about natural environments and forest kindergartens overseas, and the pre-school is now visiting areas of natural surroundings in the community.

"We are taking the children to visit these environments armed with cameras so they can document their ideas and interest. The money raised from the Bride of the Year this year will be used to develop the area in the coming year," Mrs Crawford says.

Tickets for Bride of the Year on Monday September 6 are on sale from Ticket Direct at the Regent on Broadway booking office.

"So buy your tickets now and come along to watch a glorious display of Palmerston North's own beautiful brides and know your enjoyment is also supporting the development of a much-loved community-based kindergarten successfully inspiring young minds," Mrs Crawford enthuses.