

Newsletter

For Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Inc
To Promote, Protect & Preserve

No 110, Summer 2017

President's Report

I was very lucky to miss a great deal of the cold, wet days of winter this year as I spent time with my daughter and her family in Switzerland. Coming home to a "spring fling" in the garden was lovely albeit much hard work.

Since the last Newsletter the Friends have hosted a talk by Dr Rainer Hoffman, on *Demystifying Photosynthesis*, and a *Walk in the Woodland*, with Section Curator, Lizzie Bristow. Both these events were well attended with the walk attracting members of the public as well as friends.

The number of young people who read about the walk on Facebook reinforces the use of social media as an advertising tool. I would like to thank Lynda Burns' "Visitor Experience Team" for promoting Friends' activities in this way.



An interesting & informative walk in the woodland with Lizzie.

The Propagating Friends had a very successful plant sale at the end of October, making a healthy \$1,700 and the plant stand continues to need replenishing two or three times each week. I would like to thank Jennie and Vicki for their hard work, as it is a big commitment.

The propagating glasshouse has just had new heat pads and a more extensive sprinkler system installed today. This equipment will give us more capacity for propagating as we keep up with the demand for plants.

The guides have been keeping busy as visitors to the Gardens increase. Visitors love to hear the Guides stories as they are taken through our beautiful gardens. This month the Guides will be photographed in the rose garden as part of a competition that the Visitor Experience Team is entering.

My call for volunteers will have alerted you to the exciting new initiative that we are embarking on - to provide information for the public at a Horticultural and Conservation Hub based in the Old Information Centre. This initiative, led by Don Bell, is one of the Friends' objectives in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Gardens. namely to "join and coordinate with staff to provide botanical, horticultural, conservation and science information to visitors through the Science and Research Centre Master Plan". The Old Information Centre has been set aside for this project and will hopefully be refitted for purpose next year. We will be trialling this Information Hub beginning on the 6 December and volunteers will be given onsite training and rostered on duty with Canterbury Horticultural Society Members. Please volunteer for our roster it should be fun, no great skills required.

I must once again thank all of you who have volunteered for the Gardens in any way, great or small. In October six Friends volunteered for the Mission Headquarters project "Wild Eyes". This was a great educational programme hosted by the Gardens and DOC. Thank you also to those who have paid your subscription for the year.



Karen Smith (Park Ranger), Lorraine Langbridge, Jane Vinnell & Mary Carnegie helping serve Kawa Kawa tea at 'Mission Headquarters'

A very special thanks to Maria Adamski for the great service she has given the Friends formatting the Newsletter over a number of years. I am sure you all join me in thanking Maria for her dedication and expertise in this.

Thank you to Tracey Haines for taking on this task to help our wonderful editor, Bill Whitmore. We appreciate your efforts and all look forward to the Newsletter.

Lastly I must thank once again, the hard working Gardens staff who have had an unsettled year with reviews and change proposals. Thank you one and all for your work in our beautiful Gardens and your friendly commitment to the Friends. May you have a wonderful Christmas and a very settled New Year. We look forward to supporting you in the work that you do.

Merry Christmas
See you at our Christmas Party
Jeanette Christensen

Garden News

The Gardening Apprentice

I started this job with little knowledge about horticulture, only what I had learned within my own garden! One and half years in and I have learnt so much, from the brilliant collection curators at the Botanic Gardens and Mona Vale, and the study I do as part of my apprenticeship.



Tori Taylor

I am one of three apprentices and we take our turns working in the Botanic Gardens and Mona Vale. Currently I am working at Mona Vale and have been there for six months. This time of year, things are getting busier and busier, with watering, mowing, the annual-bedding displays and keeping the garden lovely.

We have recently pruned a *Buddleia salviifolia* that was 3-4 m high and 2 m round. The last time it was pruned was before the 2011 earthquake, so lots of suckers and big branches to cut through. Because of its size, the gap we have left is quite significant, but it will soon start growing and filling in.

We have also been busy composting; the rose garden was done first, followed by the other collections, such as the iris border, fernery, the blue and white border and the hot border. This was done over a month, with constant deliveries of compost. Saw my chiropractor more than once!

Mona Vale has beautiful buildings. Repairs of the lodge and homestead are all completed and just recently, the gatehouse on Fendalton Road. Once the repairs had started, the garden was left for a while, so we have gone in to tidy it up a bit for the new tenant. Using brush cutters, lawn mowers and some good pruning tools, we managed to get it tidy enough; it still needs some attention but for now it is tidy.

As the warm seasons come, we will have plenty to keep us occupied, and more new things for me to learn! Canterbury Show week is upon us and it is always the best time for the rose garden here, which is looking so beautiful! Be sure to come and visit.

Tori Taylor, Horticultural Trainee

Articles

Lawrie Metcalf – former Assistant Director of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens

Lawrence ('Lawrie') Metcalf was one of New Zealand's most renowned horticulturists, and a distinguished author and conservationist. He had a special love of the native plants of New Zealand

and over the decades wrote many books and gave numerous talks, demonstrations, and lectures, generously sharing his knowledge and experience. Not only was he known for his knowledge of the native flora, but Lawrie was also an expert of plants from around the world.

Working career

Lawrie Metcalf was born in 1928 in Christchurch. When Lawrie was still at primary school, in Form 2, he was given six native tree seedlings by Lance McCaskill, a notable educator and conservationist and a lecturer in agriculture and biology at Christchurch Teachers' Training College. Through his encouragement and enthusiasm to grow New Zealand native plants, Lawrie chose horticulture as his profession from this early age.

After leaving school, Lawrie first entered horticulture in 1945 working at Nairns' Nursery in Christchurch for nine months.

In 1946, Lawrie transferred as a horticultural trainee with the Christchurch Domains Board. At that time, the Domains Board managed the Christchurch Botanic Gardens and Hagley Park.

In 1948 Lawrie left Christchurch for New Plymouth where he worked for one year with New Zealand's largest plant nursery, Duncan and Davies Ltd.

Lawrie then left New Zealand for Australia and worked for a year at the Melbourne Botanic Gardens and another year at the Adelaide Botanic Gardens.

From there, Lawrie moved to the UK where he found work at Ingwersen's Hardy Plant Nursery in Sussex that specialised in alpine plants. He stayed there for about a year, after which he spent a short time working with trees and shrubs at Hillier Nurseries, one of the most famous nurseries in the UK. Lawrie then went on to be a gardener at Winkfield Place in Berkshire for two years. This was where the famous British educator, florist and author Constance Spry together with Rosemary Hume were running a Domestic Science School for girls.

Lawrie returned to New Zealand in 1955 to take up the position of Assistant Curator of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. In 1968, through a restructure, the Assistant Curator position became Assistant Director Botanic Gardens which he held until 1977. During these 22 years, Lawrie made significant contributions to the development and management of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. His vision, skills and determination focused on establishing the Gardens on a more scientific and educational footing for the benefit of all users – the general

public, students, and botanical and horticultural professionals. Lawrie managed a staff of 39 and initiated a sweeping programme to improve the plant collections including their documentation and labelling.

Lawrie devoted a great deal of time to building up the New Zealand plant section of the Gardens, particularly through excursions to collect plants from various areas. He collected plant material from throughout New Zealand and also spent much of his time collecting plants in the mountain regions of the South Island. In 1958 and 1960 he accompanied the Canterbury Museum expeditions to remote areas of Fiordland as the official botanist. Lawrie collected live and herbarium specimens which added to the body of knowledge of the areas visited. In 1961 Lawrie spent a month in New Caledonia where he made extensive collections of plants to bring back to New Zealand for both horticultural and scientific purposes.



Lawrie Metcalf at Mt Arthur

Lawrie developed and expanded the international seed exchange programme for the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. Exchanges were conducted with

more than 300 botanic gardens throughout the world, exporting New Zealand native plant seeds and in return receiving seeds of interesting exotics for trialling and growing on in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens.

In 1977 Lawrie moved to Invercargill to take the position of Director of Parks and Recreation for the Invercargill City Council. Here he had a staff of more than 100 with a further 100 involved in various training schemes to help the unemployed.

Apart from his day-to-day supervision of general parks maintenance, Lawrie instigated large scale improvements to Queens Park. These included construction of a garden area for the cultivation of sub-antarctic plants (in association with the Roaring Forties display in the adjoining Southland Museum) and using the Jessie Calder bequest to create a special garden area in Queens Park, featuring historic shrub roses, heaths, and dwarf and low-growing conifers.

Lawrie also oversaw intensive development of the 2,000 ha Sandy Point Domain, to make it more appealing and accessible to the public. This involved the planning and construction of walking tracks, park interpretation, enhancement of native plants and other environmental and historic areas within the Domain.

Lawrie commenced the development of Donovan Park as a farm park, along with the construction of a new nursery for propagation and planting up the park. He also oversaw creation of the Sutherland Rose Garden, one of the highlights of Anderson Park.

Throughout his career, Lawrie inspired young horticulturists and trainees to continue their studies and expand their knowledge of plants, horticulture and parks management. Many of those inspired by Lawrie went on to hold senior positions in horticulture and parks management throughout the country.

Home life

Lawrie Metcalf was a patient and loving husband, father, and grandfather. He married his wife Lena in 1962, and they went on to have three children, Paul, Sarah, and Victoria. Grandchildren followed, providing a rich and extended home life. His love of the outdoors, and photographing and collecting plants, led to many family excursions together.

Since his official “retirement” in 1992, Lawrie actively continued his writing and horticultural interests from his home in the Nelson area. At an age when most people have well and truly retired to a quieter life, Lawrie and Lena developed their Stringers Creek property ‘Greenwood’ in Nelson into a large rambling garden full of native and exotic plants, and running a boutique mail order nursery specialising in ornamental grasses and groundcover plants.

In 2012, Lawrie and Lena moved into their new house in Lincoln, Canterbury, to be closer to family. Unfortunately, soon after this new chapter in their lives, Lawrie’s health declined, and in 2015 he went into care at Anthony Wilding Retirement Village in Halswell, Christchurch. He passed away peacefully on the day of his 89th birthday.

Memberships

Lawrie Metcalf was a member of the Canterbury Botanical Society, joining in 1955, and was their President for three years. He was also a member of the International Dendrology Society and a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Parks and Recreation Administration.



Lawrie and Lena Metcalf at their former ‘Greenwood’ property in Nelson.

Lawrie joined the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (RNZIH) in September 1957 and made numerous contributions, including serving on the National Executive. He was an examiner for both oral and practical and written exams for many years. In 1960 he was actively involved in the revision of the National Diploma of Horticulture (NDH) prescriptions.

Lawrie was the RNZIH Convenor of the Nomenclature Committee, responsible for the registration of cultivars of New Zealand native plants, including *Coprosma*, *Hebe*, *Leptospermum*, *Phormium* and *Pittosporum*. He held this position of Registrar of New Zealand native genera for the International Cultivar Registration Authority (ICRA) for a remarkable 55 years, since the RNZIH was first accepted as an authority in 1958.

In recognition of his contributions to horticulture, he was made a Fellow of the RNZIH (FRIH) and became an Associate (AHRIH) in 1988.

Recognition and awards

1957: The first recipient of the David Tannock Memorial Prize, awarded by the RNZIH to “the candidate gaining the highest marks in the Oral and Practical Stage III examination for the National Diploma in Horticulture”.

1958: National Diploma of Horticulture (NDH) from the RNZIH.

1959: The RNZIH Cockayne Gold Medal for the most successful candidate to complete their NDH. This included his thesis on New Zealand alpine plants.

1975: Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Park and Recreation Administration.

1978: The Loder Cup, presented to “encourage and honour New Zealanders who work to investigate, promote, retain and cherish our indigenous flora”.

1988: Award of Associate on Honour (AHRIH) of the RNZIH, an honour restricted to those who have “rendered distinguished service to horticulture in New Zealand”.

1988: Ian Galloway Outstanding Achievement Award, which “Recognises outstanding contribution in the Parks, amenity horticulture and open space”.

1991: Veitch Memorial Medal, to “persons of any nationality who have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement and improvement of the science and practice of horticulture”. Lawrie is one of only a few New Zealanders to have received this prestigious medal, the highest honour that the Royal Horticultural Society awards to people outside the UK.

1999: Honorary Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, to “A person distinguished by scientific, artistic, literary or other eminent attainment whose activities promote or have promoted the aims and objectives of the Institute”. Lawrie was one of only six Honorary Fellows of the NZILA.

2010: Appointed a Companion of the Queen’s Service Order (QSO) for services to horticulture and conservation.

2017: The Christchurch Botanic Gardens Herbarium was officially renamed the “Lawrie Metcalf Herbarium”.

Publications

Lawrie Metcalf has done more than probably anyone else to encourage New Zealand gardeners to use our native plants. He began actively writing around 1960, and today is widely recognised as New Zealand’s most authoritative writer on the cultivation of our native plants with numerous publications to his credit. His publications include cultivation, propagation, photographic guides, and cultivar registers of native plants.



Lawrie’s best known and most enduring book is the iconic *The Cultivation of New Zealand Trees and Shrubs*, first published in 1972, and so successful that it has been republished and revised more than five times. This outstanding work was a real labour of love, and involved many evenings and weekends of Lawrie taking photographs in the field and making drawings from home, hand-writing the text and botanical descriptions, and Lena painstakingly typing and retyping the manuscript. What a remarkable and inspirational gift they both gave New Zealanders. Lawrie’s books have achieved such popularity by successfully bridging the gap between horticulture and systematic botany and imparting botanical knowledge in a clear and comprehensible manner. This was realised right

from this, Lawrie's first book; in the foreword, Lance McCaskill referred to Lawrie's book as being the first comprehensive work since Dr Leonard Cockayne's *The Cultivation of New Zealand Plants*, which was originally published in 1923. McCaskill wrote: "But Cockayne's book has long been out of print, and there has since developed a pressing need for up-to-date knowledge, for an illustrated book that would give us simple but accurate botanical descriptions of our native trees and shrubs, and that would help us choose suitable examples for specimen trees, for groups, for colour, for hedges, for dry places, for wet areas; a book to tell us how to propagate and cultivate them, and how to control pests and diseases. Surely this would appear an impossible task: but Mr Metcalf has achieved the apparently impossible." This achievement is made all the more remarkable by the fact that Lawrie did not have a formal science background in botany or plant ecology.

To cover more than the trees and shrubs of this first work, books that followed comprehensively showcase native herbaceous plants, grasses, alpines, and groundcovers. Lawrie's book on native grasses rode the wave of popularity for using them in landscaping, just as his trees and shrubs book heralded the rise in popularity for growing native New Zealand plants.

As part of his cultivar registration duties, Lawrie compiled the major *International Register of Hebe Cultivars*, published by the RNZIH in 2001. This 232-page register represents 15-years of painstaking research by Lawrie and is an invaluable and authoritative reference to more than 800 cultivars.

His most recent book, *New Zealand Native Ground Cover Plants*, was co-authored by Roy Edwards in 2014. Until recently, Roy was a long-standing lecturer in horticulture at Lincoln University (he retired in 2017), and their two-year Lincoln-based collaboration was a productive one, filling another gap in the horticultural literature of our native plants.

A selection of titles by Lawrie Metcalf includes:
1972–1991: The cultivation of New Zealand trees and shrubs

1993: The cultivation of New Zealand plants 1995–2007: The propagation of New Zealand native plants

1996: Alpine plants of New Zealand: Mobil New Zealand nature series

1998–2008: The cultivation of New Zealand native grasses

2000: New Zealand native rock garden and alpine plants

2000: New Zealand trees and shrubs

2001: International register of *Hebe* cultivars

2002: A photographic guide to trees of New Zealand

2003: A photographic guide to ferns of New Zealand

2006–2009: A photographic guide to alpine plants of New Zealand

2006: Hebes – a guide to species, hybrids and allied genera

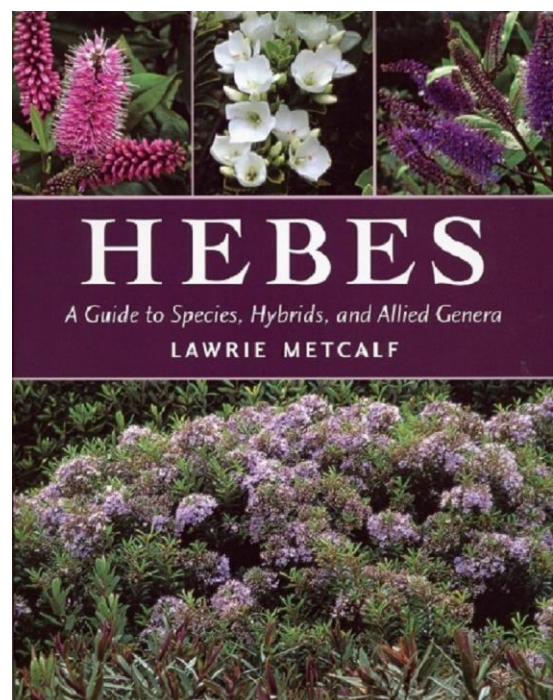
2006: Know your New Zealand trees

2009: Know your New Zealand native plants

2014: New Zealand native ground cover plants: A practical guide for gardeners and landscapers.

In addition to his books, over the years Lawrie contributed to many local and overseas horticultural and botanical publications.

Lawrie's passionate plant knowledge will live on through these writings and the inspiration he has given to so many, including myself. It was an honour to know him.



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Kinsey, M. (2006): Lawrie Metcalf 'More than just Hebes'. *New Zealand Garden Journal* 9(2): 24–25. (Available at www.rnzih.org.nz/RNZIH_Journal/Pages_24-25_from_2006_Vol9_No2.pdf).

From the obituary compiled by Murray Dawson for the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects.

The Australian Inland Botanic Gardens Mildura/Wentworth

I visit these gardens about twice a year, usually late summer when it is very hot – 30/45 degrees and spring time when temperatures range from 20/30 degrees.



Alyogyne hakeifolia (native hibiscus)

The AIBG were established in 1990 on 272 acres. They are situated on the New South Wales border of the Murray River; a 10 minute drive from Mildura. The gardens are operated by one head full-time

gardener, two apprentices and a large number of volunteers who man the different areas eg the rose garden, nature trail and the hospitality people in the café/gift shop.

There are financial grants from both the Mildura and Wentworth Councils. The Gardens have water rights from the water pumped up from the Murray River. Excess water is able to be sold to local market gardeners which brings in another income.

My favourite area is the Nature Trail. The plants here are indigenous to a 200 km radius of the Botanic Gardens. Examples of flora in this area are the Mallee trees. This is the common name for twelve *Eucalypt* species native to semi-arid areas of Australia. The Mallee tree has evolved a survival technique to withstand fire and drought by developing an underground “lignotuber” containing buds which will shoot after a fire. In many cases the lignotuber is much older than the trunks which may be repeatedly burnt off, but the tree survives.



Flora in foreground, fauna in background

Other interesting plants in this area are the saltbush shrubs. Saltbush is a name for a number of shrubby plants which have adapted to the arid inland areas of Australia. They can live in the saline soils of areas once covered by the sea. The most prevalent species here is *Atriplex nummularia* (old man saltbush) which is found in the understory of the Mallee eucalypts.

I have found the best time to visit these gardens is early in the morning when numerous species of bird life abound. There are colourful parrots, kookaburras and currawongs to name but a few.

Mary Carnegie

The curious case of *Dodonea viscosa* – Ake Ake

It's over 20 years since I was amazed to see our Ake Ake in the "Plants indigenous to Arizona" section of the Desert Botanic Gardens in Phoenix, Arizona and then to be told by a passing ranger that it was also a native of Florida (Florida hop bush). That was less surprising when I found out that it was first officially described by a young Belgian plant explorer Jacquin, who was sent to the West Indies to look for plants suitable as house plants in posh European houses. He found *Dodonea viscosa* in Jamaica sending a specimen back to Linnaeus who was working at that time at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands.

Linnaeus apparently recognized it from material sent to him from India when he had named it *Ptelia viscosa* and earlier, in 1737, J Burm and Thes Zeylan described it in an Institute de France publication, in the pre-Linnaeus's binomial system days, as *Carpinus forte viscosa salicus folio integro oblongo*. But Linnaeus settled on *Dodonea viscosa* (L) Jacq. after a Belgian physician and herbalist Dodoen who wrote one of the first Herbals in the 1500's

Later I found *Dodonea viscosa* as a street berm plant in Al Ain in Abu Dhabi and was told that it was a native of the coast of Oman next door. A quick Google search soon revealed that it had the widest distribution of any vascular plant in the world, over 60 countries ranging from Afghanistan to Bermuda. The Kaiteriti spit by Lake Ellesmere has the

distinction of being the southernmost point of its world-wide distribution.

Our family in Arizona have just moved to Alabama and a visit to them provided a good excuse to go to Florida to track down the Florida hopbush, preferably in the wild. Hurricane Irma made that too difficult so I settled for the University of Florida's massive herbarium at their Gainesville campus, nicely midway on the two day drive between Troy Alabama and Miami.

I had made an appointment and they had their *Dodonea* specimens ready for me – a generous



Herbarium specimen of *Dodonea viscosa* collected in Florida.

30 or so specimens of the staggering diversity of leaf shapes and forms, all collected in Florida. I had seen some diversity in some specimens in Arizona but nothing like this, especially as they were all collected from an area smaller than our South Island. It reminded me that it is considered a polymorphic species meaning, like humans, it comes in all shapes and sizes. No one had any answers as to why it is so variable in the relatively compact area of Florida and there doesn't appear to be any consistent relationship with the diverse habitats it grows in.

I did manage to see a live specimen in the wonderful Fairchild Botanic Gardens in Miami albeit with the aid of their data base and some very helpful staff. They were just about finishing a massive clean-up from Hurricane Irma less than a month before and the specimen was a little beat-up but surviving.



Dodonaea viscosa, Fairchild Botanic Gardens, Miami FL

Dodonaea viscosa is indigenous to most of the Caribbean Islands but my attempts to find it in Cuba drew a blank. They have a huge 600 acre botanic garden (in reality an arboretum) established by Castro in the early '60s as part of Lenin Park. I hired a 1958 Dodge convertible "taxi" with an

English speaking driver and we had a gardens guide for a drive through the very impressive collections of trees, notably Araucarias and Palms. They didn't have *Dodonaea* on their data base or any knowledge of it.

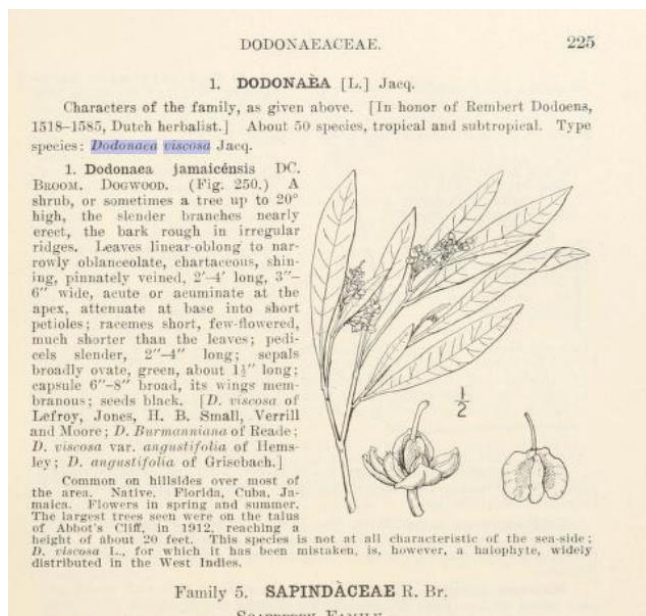
Its eastern-most point is probably Bermuda, as it shows up in the 1923 Flora of Bermuda, (see drawing.

This search for *Dodonaea* in all sorts of exotic places has been a great excuse to get away from the tourist traps and to meet some wonderful real people. I've only scratched the surface – there's Afghanistan and its neighbours, India, Chinese and Japanese islands, the east coast of Africa, most Pacific Islands, and the west coast of South America to go. Bon Voyage!

Alan Morgan

Look at that plant - *Parrotiopsis jacquemontiana*

In the last Newsletter (No 109) collection curator David Barwick described the work that has gone into redeveloping the Temperate Asian Border. So when we volunteer Gardens guides had their monthly training session in early September we were very interested to have Richard Poole show us the result of these efforts, as well as the many developments elsewhere in the Gardens.



From the Flora of Bermuda 1923 (Wrongly labeled "Jamaicensis")



P. jacquemontiana in flower in the Temperate Asian Border.

The tireless work of cleaning out unwanted plants and growth now means that the Border is much

more attractive; many unusual and interesting plants can now be more easily seen and admired.

One plant that attracted the attention of many of us was a specimen of *Parrotiopsis jacquemontiana*. It was in full flower on the day.

P. jacquemontiana is a species of deciduous shrub or small tree in the witch hazel family. It is native to the western Himalayas and is found at altitudes from 1200 to 2800 m and grows to 6 m high by 4 m wide. It has hermaphrodite flowers borne in dense tufts of stamens from April to June.

The wood of *P. jacquemontiana* wood is strong, hard, heavy and very close-grained. It is used for everyday items such as axe handles, walking sticks and tent pegs. The branches and twigs being flexible as well as being strong are used in basket making. They can also be twisted together into thick ropes for making bridges.

It is a pity the name of the plant is such a mouthful. I sometimes wonder whether the people who come up with names such as this had unhappy childhoods and try to deal with their negative feelings by inflicting upon us plant names such as this which are difficult to pronounce, remember and spell.

The name is derived from *Parrotia* and *opsis* meaning "resembling *Parrotia*". As I was not familiar with *Parrotia* I wondered what it was like



Specimen of *Parrotiopsis* in the late Max Visch's garden.
Photo Clarisse Visch.

and how *Parrotiopsis* resembled it. *Parrotia*, or ironwood, is another member of the witch hazel family. I read that it too has very hard wood so perhaps this is the point of resemblance between the two.

You might be wondering how *Parrotia* got its name. It has nothing to do with the birds in cages who say "Pretty Polly" but is named after the German naturalist Friedrich Parrot.

Adrienne Moore has mentioned another plant in the witch hazel family useful for the home garden. *Fothergilla* or witch alder is prized for its colourful autumn foliage.

Bill Whitmore

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Friends' website

Have you visited the Friends' website? The address is <http://www.friendschchbotanicgardens.org.nz/>

Distribution of Newsletter

We distribute the Newsletter by email to those members who have given us their email addresses and who have not requested otherwise – emailing rather than mailing the Newsletter saves costs for the Friends. If, however, you would prefer to receive the Newsletter by mail, rather than electronically, please contact Penny Martin – phone 332 6866 or email - graememartin1@xtra.co.nz

Website - <http://www.friendschchbotanicgardens.org.nz/>

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