

Newsletter

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

No 75, Summer 2008/09

President's Report

I mentioned in my annual report at our AGM in August of this year just how reliant we are as an organization on the goodwill of the large group of volunteers we currently have. If the tougher economic conditions occur over the next few years as predicted the reliance on volunteer assistance within the community will become more important than ever.

I am aware that a number of major botanic Gardens in USA have very strong and supportive volunteer groups associated with their Botanic Gardens. These groups make a significant contribution to their general operations and overall upkeep and help stimulate local community interest.

In New Zealand over the next few years it is quite likely that many local authorities could have to cut their operating budgets so as to keep annual rates at an acceptable level and this may well impact on our own City Council.

The 'Friends' are currently considering how we may be able to assist our own Botanic Gardens with increased volunteer input so that we can help to enhance the gardens as well as maintain them at their present standard. We are sure there are many citizens throughout the city with an interest in gardening who may wish to give a day or half a day per week or fortnight to assist in maintaining our well-known and admired Gardens. It is envisaged that we would have a co-ordinator to assist with the allocation of work and the supplying of hand tools.

In March of next year the City will be staging the Ellerslie Flower Show and along with many other similar groups and numerous garden clubs we will be staging an exhibit to publicize the work the 'Friends' do in promoting and assisting the role of our Botanic Gardens. This has been organized by some of our Committee members and a staff member from the Gardens. Being part of this show this will give us a great opportunity to further promote the role of the Gardens to visitors and the general public.

We wish to have a number of volunteers to be on a roster over the four days the show is on and to assist with giving out pamphlets and answering any questions from the public. This will be a good chance for volunteers to be part of the show and to observe the importance of such a major horticultural event. Those of you who may be interested in assisting at our exhibit for the Ellerslie Flower Show will you please contact Charles Graham, who is one of committee members - phone 348- 5896.

Don Bell.

Editor's note

We continue to distribute the Newsletter by email to those members who have given us their email addresses and who have not requested otherwise. If you would prefer to receive the Newsletter by mail, rather than electronically, please contact Bill Whitmore – phone 339 8356 or billpauline@ihug.co.nz

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FCBG
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Gardens' News

Jeremy Hawker reports –

The Botanic Garden is unfortunately at times the site of antisocial behaviour and at a recent meeting of the Botanic Gardens of NZ the issue of security was discussed. It is unfortunate that no garden was immune to activity that results in degraded collections or vandalism. I was therefore interested to find this article published in the Tuapeka Times, Volume XVI, Issue 1013, 6 February 1884,

“An extraordinary amount of pilfering of valuable plants goes on in the Christchurch Domain. The bed of New Zealand ferns (says the "Lyttelton Times"), now nearly bare, has been four or five times thickly planted, and each time has been shamelessly robbed, the plants being pulled up by the roots and carried away. The late Mr Andrew Duncan, and Mr Lewis, of Timaru, each presented to the gardens a handsome collection of over 30 fuchsias, but of the whole number all but five were stolen a few days after they were planted out. A worse fate attended the bedding out of a large and handsome collection of tricolour geraniums, which was completed at 11 o'clock one day. In three hours every plant had been stolen." And the Curator finds that the thieves are not of the working classes, but are people who, from their dress and manner, may claim to belong to the middle and upper ranks of life, while the majority are women. Men, as a rule, are not among the pilferers.” (National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa.)

It is clear that this activity has been an issue in the past and will be in the future. The fern collection within the Fern house has been redeveloped and New Zealand frost tender species have been planted. We trust that they are not removed in the quantity described in 1884.

Another piece of history, relating to the entrance to the gardens, made informative reading. A recent article in the Press referred to the dark entrance off Rolleston Avenue. In the Management Plan and at subsequent Council hearings and

meetings, staff have been asked to look at entrances off Rolleston Avenue after the Botanic Gardens Building project is complete, and the Museum alterations and plans confirmed. In the future, these entrances will be reviewed with the aim of upgrading and enhancing.

In the *Illustrated Guide to Christchurch and Neighbourhood 1885* Montague Mosley commented:

“The public gardens (or Government Domain) are situated in a bend of the Avon on the western side of the city and immediately adjoining it, with the main entrance opposite the end of Hereford Street, only about five minutes walk from the centre of the town. Along the side of Antigua Street a strip of ground has been left unfenced in front of the gardens and planted with a splendid avenue of sycamores and elms, which afford pleasant shade during the hot days of summer.” (New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, Victoria University of Wellington.)

The frontage described in 1885 has long since been altered and changed with the trees having been replaced. The trees within this landscape are continually changing over time and there is currently a stage in the Gardens' life that many of the trees planted early in the gardens history are requiring attention or replacement. The Lebanon cedar (*Cedrus libani*) is one example of a tree reaching a stage in its life when decisions are needed to be made about its future. The tree has been previously cabled and braced to extend its life and over the past months has lost a large limb that has resulted in the tree being assessed. Options for this particular specimen are the following:

1. Reduce the head by 40 % and extend the life of the tree by 5 to 10 years,
2. Cable, brace and isolate from public access using a fence or similar, or
3. Removal and replacement.

The three options have different sets of advantages and disadvantages, and decisions are made not only about individual trees but other factors included in the process. These include; the heritage or conservation value, opportunities to replant new material, the number of specimens within the Gardens, etc. The observant will have noted that each year all of the cedars within the gardens are shedding branches. Unless we start

replanting, there will be no mature cedars for the next generation to enjoy. The Botanic Gardens is loved because of the range and variety of the mature trees, and having a succession of replanting continues the practice of the past and looks forward to the future providing future generations with a rich diversity of plant material to enjoy.

Botanic Gardens Information Centre Display

“History on a Plate – Food Plants that Changed the World” display:

Understanding how the world has changed from the discovery, cultivation and consumption of food plants we enjoy today.

Running from November 2008 through to February 2009

Events in the Gardens

10 January – 1 March.

Lazy Weekends

Various Christchurch artists performing for the pleasure of the public.

3.30-5.00 pm every Sunday on the Botanic Gardens Central Lawn (near the Rose Garden).

1 February – 22 March.

Sunday Bandstand

Various times and locations.

8 January – 15 February. **Anthony Harper Lawyers Summer Theatre**

Daffodil Lawn, Botanic Gardens.

Shows: Tuesday – Sunday, 7pm.

Saturdays and Sundays, 2pm matinees (but no matinee on 14 February).

Waitangi Day, 2pm matinee, and 7pm.

20 February - 16 March.

Festival of Flowers

Six established sculptors will be exhibiting their work in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens in a new Festival of Flowers event set to inspire, challenge and amuse.

Articles

Curators of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens

The previous Newsletter gave a history of the Curator's House. How about the Curators of the Gardens and the contributions they made to the Christchurch Botanic Gardens? This is a brief story of the successive Curators (or their equivalents) up to Alan Jolliffe, the last Curator to occupy the Curator's House.

Enoch Barker; 1860-1867

Barker, a Yorkshireman, was appointed in 1860 as 'Government Gardener'.

He established a nursery of four acres near the present yard area. Trees such as sycamores, oaks and elms were imported from England as young trees. They were transported by ship in wooden cases and after their six months journey were plunged into the river to revive. Only the strongest survived. Enoch Barker nurtured these plants and was responsible for planting many of the older English trees that add dignity and beauty to the Botanic Gardens, Hagley Park and the city.

The planting of the Albert Edward oak by Enoch Barker in July 1863 marks the foundation date of the Botanic Gardens.

John and Joseph Armstrong; 1866-1889

The 1870's and 1880's were key years for the Botanic Gardens and it was fortunate that John Armstrong, a Scottish horticulturist, was Curator for most of that time. And for 16 of those years he was duly assisted by his son, Joseph, who was in charge of the nursery work.

They worked to lay-out and plant the Botanic Gardens of 75 acres and the much larger Hagley Park beyond the Gardens' boundaries. They are responsible for many of the pathways and the general layout as it is today. But they did much more than that. Carrying out the original purpose of the Acclimatisation Society, the Armstrongs introduced, established, propagated, and distributed no less than 4000 different plant species, both useful and ornamental, by way of the Botanic Gardens, to the farms, plantations and gardens of New Zealand. They raised European

trees in the Gardens in extraordinary numbers; between 1870 and 1882 the Gardens were the source of 763,034 trees for general planting throughout the Province.

The Armstrongs, Joseph in particular, were also keenly interested in the native flora. Joseph collected plants throughout Canterbury and established, on the site of the original nursery, a "native garden" which was described later, in 1911, by eminent botanist, Leonard Cockayne, as "one of the horticultural landmarks of the Domain." It is believed that there are still a few trees left of this native garden, such as a kowhai and a larger Ribbonwood. He contributed a large amount of herbarium material to the Canterbury Museum; and he sent seeds of New Zealand to many botanic institutions in Europe receiving in exchange seeds of old world and American plants to add to New Zealand's floral wealth. Both father and son wrote for numerous journals, learned and unlearned, publishing their discoveries about the flora of the South Island, and especially the Canterbury region.

The Armstrongs were singularly ill-rewarded for their very valuable work. For example, Joseph's herbarium material formed a unique and very large collection of plants new to the botanical world. Julius Haast (later Sir Julius von Haast), however, sent so large part of it to European herbaria and museums without asking Joseph's permission, taking all the credit for collecting it himself, that when Joseph, dying in 1926, left his collection to the Botanic Gardens, it was found to contain only 900 specimens of the many thousands he had intended to bequeath.

The Armstrongs were treated shabbily not only by Sir Julius. Unfortunately, the desires of the Armstrongs to build up the botanical collections and emphasise the scientific aspects of the gardens did not please their employer. The Domains Board had taken over the management of the Gardens in 1876 and wanted a pretty, tidily maintained park with an emphasis on colourful displays of bedding plants. The board apparently saw little merit in the "native garden". Matters came to a head in 1889, when the board demanded that the Armstrongs submit monthly work programmes for approval, and concentrate on bedding-plant displays. Both Armstrongs resigned.

Much of the trouble between the Armstrongs and authorities was due to shortage of money; they were expected to do half a dozen jobs because hard times made it impossible to find the money to pay enough gardeners.

The Armstrongs were the first occupants of the original, very modest Curator's House.

Ambrose Lloyd Taylor; 1889-1907

Taylor had had about the best training a gardener could have had. His father had been a gardener at the Duke of Bedford's Woburn. He commenced his training at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew as a student-gardener and his career had included terms as head gardener to Lord Rothschild and to the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth.

On coming to Christchurch in 1889 Taylor's efforts also were hampered by the Board's financial difficulties. He found the Domain to be in a neglected state, and although he planned many improvements, these could not be put into effect. Nevertheless many of the avenues of trees in Hagley Park are now stately avenues and a tribute to his work. It was during his tenure that a large section of the Gardens was destroyed by fire; with the generous assistance of local nurserymen the destroyed area was completely replanted.

He had himself sworn-in as a constable in order to deal with hooliganism and vandalism in the Gardens. At one time he was acting as the Botanic Gardens Secretary because the authorities would grant no money to pay the salary of a professional secretary.

While he did succeed in clearing and planting more land and in restoring and improving the Gardens as a whole, Taylor's 18 year service was one long struggle and frustration.

James Dawes; 1907-1908

Little is known of Dawes who was appointed Curator in 1907 after the retirement of A.L. Taylor. He resigned the following year.

James Young; 1908-1933

Young was another Englishman. He had trained in horticulture in England and forestry in Australia.

He was fortunate in that when he took over, in 1908, the hard times were over and money for the

Gardens was becoming more available.

He designed and planted the earlier rose garden, the biggest in New Zealand and Australia. He began the herbaceous border and planted collections of rhododendrons and lilacs. The Cuninghame House and Townend House were erected and furnished with plants, the children's playground was constructed and the original tea kiosk, destroyed by fire a few years later, was built. Also under Young's direction the bog gardens were made in the area south of the playground, where gravel had been mined and sold to supplement the garden budget in an earlier period. The ponds that were created are now one of the most attractive features of the Gardens. Young also re-established the collection of indigenous plants that had been neglected since the Armstrong days.

James McPherson; 1933-1945

James McPherson, the first New Zealand born Curator, succeeded Young. He redesigned the rose garden, reducing it in area and making it a circle defined by clipped yew hedges; with the stunning result we enjoy today. He made the Rock Garden as it is now. He established the Cockayne Memorial Garden where indigenous trees and shrubs are displayed. He also planted collections of magnolias and azaleas which remain a feature of the Gardens in spring, and began the planting of many thousands of daffodils in the woodland area south of the river. He also planted the first Yoshino flowering cherry trees along Harper Avenue.

When McPherson moved to Auckland in 1945 Brendon Mansfield was appointed.

Brendon Mansfield; 1945-48

While Mansfield was appointed Curator, following the passing of the Domains Act in 1946, the Curator served under the Director of the Botanic Gardens, Parks and Reserves. Mansfield died in 1948.

Morris John Barnett (Director); 1946-1955

In 1928 Barnett was appointed Superintendent of Parks & Reserves to the Christchurch City Council. When the City Council took over control of the Botanic Gardens and Hagley Park in 1946, following the passing of the Domains Act, he became Director of the Botanic Gardens, Parks & Reserves.

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He established the rose species garden and commenced the formation of the *Primula* garden along the small stream that enters the Avon. The Fern House was built and the construction of the new Townend House and Garrick House commenced.

Huia Gilpin – (Assistant Director); 1955-1979

Huia Gilpin who became Assistant Director (Curator) in 1949 was well qualified for the position. He was the first person in New Zealand to pass the National Diploma in Horticulture by examination in 1939 and later studied landscape design at Canterbury University. He was promoted to Director of Botanic Gardens Parks & Reserves in 1955. During his term a library and offices for the staff were completed, the New Zealand alpine garden was reconstructed, water reticulation completely renewed and the stone and wrought iron fence along Rolleston Avenue frontage was built to commemorate the centenary of the Botanic Gardens. He was also responsible for the reconstruction of the Townend House and the building of the Garrick Cactus and Succulent House. Huia Gilpin is remembered for the interest he showed in the apprentices who organised weekend field trips for plant identification and seed collection expeditions. Huia and his wife Florence invited the apprentices to the Curator's House to study from the many books on horticulture and gardening kept on his bookshelves.

Lawrie J. Metcalf – (Assistant Curator); 1955 – 1977

Lawrie Metcalf commenced as Assistant Curator in January 1955. Lawrie was responsible for the interior layout of the Garrick Cactus & Succulent House; along with a tradesman he worked out the construction of the diorama. He also planned the layout of the *Primula* Garden in the Woodland. He remodelled the Cockayne Garden, and the alpine garden. He replanted the rose species area with a collection of old shrub roses. The Alpine House was another of Lawrie's projects as was the original interior layout of the Fern House.

He was also responsible for the rebuilding of most of the nursery propagating houses. He divided the Gardens into sections of management and each one of those was under a separate gardener. He left to go to Invercargill in 1977.

Alan Jolliffe; 1979 - 1982

When Mr & Mrs Gilpin moved out of the Curator's

House in 1978 to take up residence in their own home in Styx, Alan Jolliffe who became Curator moved in. The Jolliffe family resided in the house until 1982 when Alan was appointed Superintendent of Parks & Gardens in Nelson.

Warwick Scadden who succeeded Jolliffe as Curator chose not to live in the Curator's House.

Sources:

Curators & the Curator's House Past and Present, Sylvia Meek, July 2003 (Included extracts from *A Garden Century 1863-1963*, Christchurch City Council.

Great Botanical Gardens of the World, Edward Hyams & William MacQuilty, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1969.

Short book, long review

Moore of Glenmark, The Richest Man in the Land, David Gee with Herbert Farrant, Auckland: Polygraphia, 2006.

For those with a love of local history, this biography is well worth reading. The authors are David Gee, a retired Christchurch journalist on both the Press and the Star and author of a number of books on New Zealand history, with Herbert Farrant, who grew up in Waipara in the 1940s and '50s and as a child was able to explore the ruins of the Glenmark Homestead. He is a foundation member and past president of the New Zealand Institute of Building.

What drew me to this book in the first instance was George Henry Moore himself. My early introduction to him was in *A Southern Gentry* by Stevan Eldred-Grigg; Stevan was living next door when he was writing the book, which served as my personal introduction to the richest and at the same time perhaps the most misanthropic of the 19th-century South Island run holders.

By the early 1990s, my fascination with the Mona Vale story, and Moore's daughter Annie Quayle Townend in particular, led me to Glenmark Station, where she had lived most of her adult life with her father. His house and magnificent, lavish garden is well described in Thelma Strongman's *Gardens of Canterbury*.

When her father died and Glenmark was sold, Annie Townend became the richest heiress in New Zealand. For me, Gee's biography of her father offers fascinating insights into Annie's odd manner,

both imperious and modest, her much easier communication with pets than with fellow humans. Her persona reflects the strange isolation in which she was reared as her father sought to prevent her from marrying and thus protecting her fortune. She grew up in one of the most significant gardens in the colony, with a team of gardeners to work it. She took that expertise with her to Mona Vale, so her eternal gift to Christchurch is the Mona Vale house and garden.

G H Moore's story is well researched and written in an easy style with clear prose and good referencing. The 170 pages are liberally illustrated with photographs of the buildings and the people on the estate. There is only one known extant photograph of Moore, taken in his 60s, and two formal portraits of Annie.

George Henry Moore was born on the Isle of Man in 1812. His school friendship with Manxman Robert Kermode resulted in his going to work as a cadet on Mona Vale, the Kermode family station near Ross in Tasmania. In 1839, Moore married Robert's sister, Annie Quayle Kermode. Nothing is known about why their marriage failed. We know for sure that they had two children, perhaps three more. Moore moved to New Zealand in 1853, prospecting for land with his brother-in-law Robert and a third party, a Reverend Lillie, another Manxman from Tasmania. By February 1854, Moore had bought his first 28,000 acres on what was then called Double Corner, north of the Waipara River. At the same time, he and Kermode bought a large run stretching from the Ashburton River to the Hinds River and more land at the mouth of the Hinds. A year later, the barque William Hyde sailed from Hobart with a consignment for Moore of 2,000 merinos, eight cattle beasts, seed, a plough, four bullock yokes and a keg of arsenic. Two more ships brought 4,000 merinos.

In March 1857, Moore bought vast acreages in the Waikari Valley and still more north of the Waipara River. "In time, this land would be joined with Glenmark to form the immense sheep station that was to make Moore, in less than 30 years, the richest man in New Zealand." Moore was a secretive, dour man and unpopular for the most part; he was well known for his stinginess. He was immensely fit, however, and in the early days would walk to Lyttelton from Glenmark in a day in order to oversee his wool shipments. A Maori woman paddled him over the Waimakariri in her

canoe.

Moore made headlines on his path to riches: for turning down a swagger who asked for shelter on a cold, wet night, who was later found dead on the roadside, for allowing his sheep to run free with scab, an infectious disease requiring sheep-dip treatment, for numerous court cases in which he contested boundaries amongst other litigation, for the biggest find of moa bones in New Zealand.

In 1866, while men were digging drainage ditches in Glenmark's swampland, they found a huge deposit of moa bones. Moore contacted German-born Julius von Haast, who had been Canterbury Provincial Geologist since 1861. Von Haast's ambition was to establish a top museum in Canterbury, so the great haul of thousands of bones was a goldmine for him. He sent photos taken by his friend Alfred Barker to the learned societies of Europe, the British Museum, and to various scientific academies in Europe and the US.

All accolades pertaining to the moa find von Haast claimed for himself with little reference to either Moore or Haast's museum colleague, Frederick Richardson Muller, who not only worked on the site but also discovered there the big bird bones of *Harpagornis moorei*, named by von Haast for Moore. It was an enormous raptor, a moa scavenger, "the largest ever known, weighing up to 13kg, with a wingspan up to three meters." A later carbon date showed that the moas were trapped in the swamp over a period of some hundreds of years about 2,700 years ago. Von Haast traded moa bones all over the world, many inaccurately identified, but the collection made him famous, as was the new Canterbury Museum he directed.

Annie Quayle Moore arrived at Glenmark from England in the mid-1860s, when she was in her early 20s. Gee quotes Douglas Cresswell as saying that when Annie first came to Glenmark, "she was young, eager and friendly. Young men would call: employees delighted to meet her. The father, however, soon altered this. He used every device to bind her to him. He consulted her on business matters and constantly advised her. There was, however, a strong maternal instinct in the daughter and, thwarted from marrying and setting up her own ménage with her children, she took to pets—dozens, scores, even hundreds of them—lambs wearing different coloured ribbons, swans, canaries and dogs."

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By 1873, Moore was ready to build a house befitting his status. He employed Christchurch architect Samuel Charles Farr to build a splendid, Gothic-style timber mansion, employing a new method of construction: "concrete clad in rusticated weatherboarding." Included in the commission were a manager's house, a gate lodge, and a gardener's house. The stable was one of the largest buildings of its type in New Zealand, and at that time, the photos show a coachman dressed in full livery.

The grounds covered 40 acres (16ha), and six gardeners were employed in a more simplified but elegant form of the Victorian garden. Christchurch nurseryman Thomas Turner laid out the gardens, and George Henry Burch was head gardener. Clipped box hedges defined the parterres, and ornamental Doulton vases were placed at the corners of the low walls around the smooth lawns and along the edge of the extensive lake in front of the house. Swans were imported.

The book offers a vibrant impression of the house, describing several glass houses attached, where vines, fruit trees and ornamental plants were grown. There was a very fine conservatory with a fountain and garden beds growing palms, creepers and tender plants. It is interesting to note that much later at Mona Vale, when Annie bought her bathhouse from the 1905 Great Exhibition, she had it laid out in those same lush tropical plants. She loved birds, and some reports say that she fed 25 dozen loaves each week to waterbirds and peacocks. One can imagine the lake at Mona Vale brimming with waterbirds.

Father and daughter organised their day as befit the owners of what the Lyttelton Times described as "one of the most magnificent private residences of the colony." It began immediately after breakfast, "when father and daughter paced the terrace in front of the mansion arm in arm and discussed business....Miss Moore would then retire to the kitchen...and give orders for the day. The staff liked her, describing her as fidgety but kind....Meanwhile, invariably dressed in black, Mr Moore would receive the estate manager and the head gardener."

It's difficult to like G H Moore but impossible not to feel shocked that after less than ten years of residence the house was destroyed by fire in 1891. Annie rescued her jewels and personal photographs and Moore his personal papers, but

every piece of imported furniture, heavy -pile carpet, fittings from Italy, blinds from Florence—11,000 pounds worth—went up in flames, and none of it insured. Moore was now 79. He had glaucoma, which eventually blinded him.

They moved to Christchurch from Glenmark and settled at 96 Park Terrace. Moore began selling off large areas of land at both Glenmark and Wakanui, forestalling the growing opposition to land monopoly until he owned a mere 11,000 acres.

The story of Annie at Mona Vale I have written here before, but this book is more detailed and accurate. She finally found a short-lived happiness when she married Joseph Henry Townend, a widower and doctor who lived down the street at number 28. They married in September 1900 at St Barnabas Church, and Annie falsified her age, saying she was 50 when records indicate that she was at least five years older. Dr Townend was younger, but he suffered poor health and died less than two years later. It's presumed the pair remained living in their separate houses, because Annie's marriage would not have been acceptable to her father.

When G H Moore died in 1905, exactly three years after Dr Townend, he left everything to Annie in the will he had made two years prior to her marriage: "Should she marry, it is my most earnest wish that her interest in my estate...be so securely settled upon her that her husband can have no control over it." He left his daughter an estate with a net value of just over 253,000 pounds, having already gifted 433,000 to her. The estate, according to Gee, was valued at about 15,000,000 pounds at today's rates.

Annie built a memorial church to both her father and her husband at Waipara. That too had its critics, so that she stayed away from the dedication service and afternoon tea. Like her father, she continued to buy properties, including Mona Vale. Many people benefited from her "constant quiet charity", and she instructed that her will be published in full in the Lyttelton Times. Annie Quayle Townend died suddenly on May 16, 1914. Her age was given as 69. She is buried beside her father, George Henry Moore, in St Peter's Anglican Church, Upper Riccarton.

Diana Madgin

Look at that tree – Box or *Buxus*.

The *Buxus* or box plant will be familiar to us all in the form of the box hedges that provide the low edges to garden beds and are an essential feature of parterre gardens. What happens, however, if you don't prune a box plant? The answer can be seen in the bed south of the Archery Lawn (close to a Japanese larch *Larix kaempferi* growing in the lawn). There you will find a single specimen of Japanese box *Buxus microphylla* var *sinica* that has been allowed to grow upwards more or less unhindered and is now a medium sized tree.

Buxus is a genus of about 70 species in the family Buxaceae. While it has the common name of box in most English-speaking countries the Americans call it boxwood.

The boxes are very widespread in their origin. They are native to western and southern Europe, southwest, southern and eastern Asia, Africa,

green, monoecious with both sexes present on a plant. The fruit is a small capsule 0.5-1.5 cm long (to 3 cm in *B. macrocarpa*), containing several small seeds. It is slow growing and much-branched. It is described as 'foxy smelling' – but I don't know what foxes smell like?

In areas like the maquis country of inland (Haute) Provence in France common or European box (*B. sempervirens*) is a very common plant on the dry calcareous soils, hillsides and woodlands. It can grow as low ground cover on mountain slopes or as trees in less harsh sites such as the bottom of the Verdon Gorge, reaching 5-6 m tall. Stumps of box trees from the Verdon Gorge were used for making boules (for petanque) at the turn of the 19th century.

As well as their use for hedges they are also used for topiary and bonsai. Owing to the relatively high density of the wood (it is one of the few woods that is denser than water), boxwood is often used for chess pieces. Chess sets almost always use



Madagascar, northernmost South America, Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean. The majority of species are tropical or subtropical, only the European and some Asian species being frost-tolerant. Centres of diversity occur in Cuba (about 30 species), China (17 species) and Madagascar (9 species).

They are slow-growing evergreen shrubs and small trees, growing to 2-12 m (rarely 15 m) tall. The leaves are opposite, rounded to lanceolate, and leathery; they are small in most species, typically 1.5-5 cm long and 0.3-2.5 cm broad, but up to 11 cm long and 5 cm broad in *B. macrocarpa*. The flowers are small and yellow-

boxwood for the white pieces and commonly use stained ('ebonized') boxwood for the black pieces, in lieu of ebony. Because of the hard even grain the wood is used for wood engraving blocks.

Boxwood is sometimes used for making clarinets. While the preferred wood is African Blackwood, boxwood is a cheaper alternative. Clarinets need a long tube of heartwood with no knots and good grain. In the making of clarinets 75% of the tree is wasted. 100,000 instruments are made a year but only 1 in 10 is of wood. Plastic is the cheapest material but there is the disadvantage of the loss of some sound quality.

Bill Whitmore

Recent Events

Friends' Guided Walks

On the 3rd Saturday of each month one of the Friends' guides leads a themed one hour walk in the Gardens. If you have not yet joined in one of these walks why don't you in the future. You will be informed and entertained. The subjects are varied; in September Neil O'Brien led a walk pointing out and providing information on the different specimens of Araucaria (the genus including Kauri, Bunya pine and Kauri). In November Diana Madgin led a group around both the Central and the Heritage Rose Gardens. And in October in a particularly innovative walk entitled 'From bark to Bach' Pat Whitman and Tricia Carr pointed out trees used in the manufacture of particular musical instruments. After explaining the connection between the tree and the instrument an excerpt of music played on the instrument followed. It was a cold day and perhaps not sufficient publicity had been given – but whatever the cause the size of the group that turned up was rather small. It is hoped that the same walk might be repeated in the future – there must be many people who would greatly enjoy it.

Coming Events

New demonstration gardens "Gardening with Indigenous Plants".

The Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens contributed towards the establishing of new demonstration gardens which are to be officially opened at 3pm, Wednesday 10 December 2008. As a member of the Friends you are most welcome to attend the opening. You will find the gardens alongside the collection of New Zealand plant cultivars and the Herb Garden beside the brick wall at the south end of the Christ's College grounds.

The purpose of this permanent display is to highlight the aesthetics and creative use of indigenous plants in both informal and formal settings and the valuable contribution that gardens can make to biodiversity goals in the city.

There are three different gardens.

- A tussock/shrub/rock garden to demonstrate opportunities for using different tussock grasses, sedges and herbs from riverbeds, cliffs, mountains and coasts together with low trees and shrubs.
- A bush garden to demonstrate opportunities for using various shade-tolerant and shade-providing native trees, shrubs and grasses.

A formal garden to demonstrate that native plants can be adapted for traditional formal settings, including such elements as low clipped hedges, elaborate topiary and manicured, uniform native lawn.



Christmas Function

Don't forget the Christmas function for the Friends at 4pm on Saturday 6 December at the Canterbury Horticultural Centre in South Hagley Park, off Hagley Avenue. Come and enjoy yourself. After the serving of drinks and food Karina Given will show slides taken by herself and her late husband, Curator David Given, including some of the stunning flora of New Zealand's sub-antarctic islands.

festival of Flowers

Christchurch, the Garden City of New Zealand, will once again host the annual **Festival of Flowers from 20 February - 16 March 2009** - organised by the Christchurch Garden City Trust. 2009 marks the Festival of Flowers' 20th anniversary. To celebrate, the usual 10-day Festival will be extended to an anniversary season. The Festival will be officially opened on Friday 20 February in Cathedral Square, with a number of garden installations in the city centre and floral and other exhibitions on view. From 11-16 March, to coincide with the first [Ellerslie International Flower Show](#) in Christchurch, the internationally acclaimed Floral Carpet & Decorations, along with an extensive music programme, will be staged in Christ Church Cathedral.

“Flora and Forma” is a special, all new component of the 2009 Festival of Flowers. A Festival-long sculpture exhibition to be held in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens.

Venue: Christchurch Botanic Gardens
Dates: Fri 20 Feb — Mon 16 March 2009
Times: Feb 7 am—9 pm, Mar 7 am—8 pm
Admission: Free

Six established sculptors will be exhibiting their work in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens in a new Festival of Flowers event set to inspire, challenge and amuse. Featured artists include Tony Bond, Sean Crawford, Alison Erickson, Hannah Kidd, Ian Lamont and Aaron Te Rangaio.

Curated by Lyttelton artist and organiser of *Sculpture on the Peninsula* Gill Hay, *Flora and Forma* will take you on a sculptural walk through the Gardens and focus attention on both exhibition and permanent sculpture highlighted by seasonal plantings. It will remind locals of the pleasure of wandering through the Botanic Gardens and provide visitors with a rich experience of Christchurch the Garden City.



Sculpture by Alison Erikson

For more Festival of Flowers event and ticketing information go to www.festivalofflowers.co.nz or call the Festival of Flowers office on (03) 365 5403.

12 FRIENDS OF THE CHRISTCHURCH BOTANIC GARDENS

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