

# Newsletter

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

*No 82, Spring 2010*

## President's Report

When I was reviewing the year's activities in preparation for my report to the Annual General Meeting it was apparent that a lot of it was around expectations of future developments.

Jeremy Hawker reported to the meeting that the Gardens had a 98% public approval rating in the most recent City Council commissioned survey, coming second only to the quality of our drinking water. So with that kind of approval why do we expect more? Well, when we didn't know about colour TV we were quite happy with black and white.....if folk realised the untapped potential of the Gardens then they might tick the 'could do better' box.

It's easy to tick the boxes that measure all the wonderful attributes the Gardens already have – the trees, the colourful displays, the tranquil spaces and the river, the proximity to town and the dedicated and skilled staff. So what's missing? To my view the proposed improvements can be summed with the mantra we used for the Gondwana workshop.....'What stories do we tell?....How do we tell them?

The Gondwana garden presents an opportunity to tell a story that has not been attempted before in the Gardens and it has the potential to be great, or it could be – pretty ordinary. Our staff proved at Ellerslie last year that a world class display is achievable even with limited time and resources. The story of the evolution of our Canterbury flora coupled with the geological evolution of the land it grows on, is our story to tell the world and the opportunity to make it as fantastic as the Ellerslie display is there for the taking.

All great projects start with a vision that can be sold to the funders and the 'stakeholders' ie the ratepayers. To help that process along the Committee and others are working on the formation of The Botanic Gardens Trust to raise funding for specific projects over and above that provided by the Council. The trust deed is close to being finalised and the Trust will be up and running by the time the funding needs for this and other projects are known.

The new 'Visitors' Centre' (maybe we should run a competition for a better name) will be up there with the best in the world and the revamped 'Native Section' has the potential to set the standard for telling the story of a local indigenous flora. And of course there are lots of other projects in the pipeline.

So to sum up with another mantra, how about "World class and uniquely ours".

Cheers  
Alan Morgan

## 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. If you would prefer to receive the Newsletter by mail, rather than electronically, please contact Philippa Graham – phone 348 5896 or email [philippa.graham@gmail.com](mailto:philippa.graham@gmail.com)

I  
N  
S  
I  
D  
E

2 Gardens' News

9 Friends News

5 Articles

**FCBG**  
PO Box 2553  
Christchurch

# Gardens' News

From Curator John Clemens

## Change and the Australian Collection

As I said in my report to the AGM of the Friends on Sunday 22 August, we can look forward to a number of exciting changes to buildings and the plant collection in the Botanic Gardens over the coming 1-2 years. However, one of the planted areas most seriously affected by building will be the Australian Section. I have been delving into the history of our Australian Collection, greatly assisted by Botanical Resources Coordinator, Sue Molloy, and by Anne Dobbs at the Botanic Gardens Information Centre. I give a brief account below. I hope that anyone reading this who can correct any errors, or who has additional information, will get in contact with me to set the record straight. I omitted my sources of information to save space in this article, but I would be happy to supply these to anyone who is interested.

The Canterbury Plains near what would become the City of Christchurch were generally open and treeless at the time of European settlement in the 1850s. The founding oak (planted by Enoch Barker in 1863) was one of the first of many Northern Hemisphere deciduous and coniferous trees planted in the Gardens and elsewhere in the new colony over the following decades. The tallest trees in the Gardens today, the *Sequoia* and *Sequoiadendron* planted in various locations, date from the 1870s.

However, from the time of Barker's appointment in 1859 through the period from 1866 when his successor John Francis Armstrong was in charge, Australian plants were also a prominent feature of the landscape. The most notable early Australian trees were tall forest eucalypts, which were planted in the 1870s along the Avon River and in strategic locations within the central area of the Botanic Gardens. At least some of these were raised from seed supplied by the Bishop of Van Diemen's Land (present day Tasmania) and were Tasmanian blue gums (*Eucalyptus globulus*).

John Armstrong, assisted by his son Joseph Beattie Armstrong, was also responsible for bringing into cultivation an extensive range of trees and shrubs from the New Zealand flora. It was in 1874 that

John Armstrong proposed the establishment of "an arboretum for New Zealand trees and shrubs ... because of the rapid destruction of our Native forests". In 1875, a Native Section (for New Zealand plants) was established in a central and prominent area of the Botanic Gardens close to the present day nursery and staff facilities.

The first border dedicated to the growing of Australian plants must also have been established in a central location reasonably close to the old Native Section in the late 1800s. We know this because it was in the path of the destructive fire that sped through the Botanic Gardens from the Magnetic Observatory to the Front Lawn in 1898. The old Native Section was also in the path of this fire. Some of the older trees and some shrubs survived.

How extensive the Australian Border was at that time, and what was grown there in the late 1800s, is not known with any certainty. However, Joseph Armstrong's own copy of Ferdinand von Mueller's *Select Plants Readily Eligible for Industrial Culture or Naturalisation in Victoria* (1976) bears the inscription "Have cultivated all plants marked" (as indicated with an elegant tick). The entry is signed "JBA" and dated October 1889. While many of the Australian (and other) plants on Joseph Armstrong's "cultivated" list might have been grown elsewhere in Canterbury, many of them might have been grown in the Botanic Gardens. The list includes 15 *Acacia* and 24 *Eucalyptus* species, including *E. amygdalina*, *E. globulus*, and *E. obliqua*.

By 1911, the old Native Section, such as had survived the fire of 1898, had become unkempt. Plans were made to transplant this scientifically important collection to its current location, and the move was made around 1913-1914. At the same time as the old Native Section was being moved, preparations were being made to establish another section devoted to Australian plants within the Botanic Gardens, presumably to replace or extend the one that was also damaged in 1898. The ground was dug and the first plants planted during 1913-1917.

There appears to be some doubt as to the location of this new Australian Section. It might have extended

to what would later become (in 1938) the Rock Garden for exotic rock and alpine plants. One of the most notable Australian trees in the Botanic Gardens is the massive specimen of alpine ash (*Eucalyptus delegatensis* formerly *E. gigantea*), which was planted at this location around 1916. A photograph appearing in a book published in 1927 shows this tree to be a vigorous specimen already of considerable stature (see figure). Recent reference has been made to a 1927 map (unsighted) that also shows the Australian Section located north of the Rock Garden.



A picture of the *Eucalyptus gigantea* (now *E. delegatensis*) growing near what would later become the Rock Garden. From J.H. Simmonds (1927) *Tree from other Lands in New Zealand. Eucalypts*. Pp 110-111. Brett Printing and Publishing, Auckland.

This location does not appear to agree with a 1913 report that the new Australian Section was located "on the north side of the rhododendron border", unless the new Australian section extended all the way from what would be the Rock Garden towards the site of the old New Zealand Section.

Today, the greatest concentration of Australian trees and shrubs surviving from those plantings made in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century can still be found in this area of the Botanic Gardens where the old New Zealand Native Section plants once grew. A few old New Zealand plants, such as kowhai (*Sophora microphylla*) and southern rata (*Metrosideros umbellata*), remain among the Australian plants. Not all of the original New Zealand plants can have been transplanted to the new Native Section in 1913.

Many of the oldest Australian trees have grown to impressive proportions, including two specimens of *Araucaria* (bunya bunya, *A. bidwillii* and hoop pine, *A. cunninghamii*) and several *Eucalyptus* (*E. obliqua*, *E. globulus* ssp. *globulus*, *E. tenuiramis*, and *E. viminalis*). There are no records of the planting dates of these trees. Some might be approaching 100 years old if they had been planted soon after the new Australian Section was established in 1913-1917. Of course, they could date from the 1800s if they were part of the earlier plantings.

The first Australian trees and shrubs of known planting date were established in this Australian Section by Laurie Metcalf and staff during the 1950s-1960s. Some of these are still growing in the Gardens and include gnarled and spreading specimens of *Personia pinifolia*, *Acacia longifolia* var. *sophorae*, *Melaleuca wilsonii*, and *Eucalyptus alpina*. Other Australian plants followed, especially during the 1980s-1990s, with over 200 species established by 2000.

Today, the Australian Section bears signs of these historical events: the oldest eucalypts and araucarias tower over more recent Australian additions, and the occasional old New Zealand plant lies hidden among its Australian cousins. But now the Australian Collection is on the move to make way for our new and wonderful Botanic Gardens Building. The collection is important. It will be transplanted, either literally or by propagating new plants from the parents, and located in its third home within the Botanic Gardens. New Australian plants will be added as circumstances allow. This time they will be part of the Gondwana Garden, where we will tell the story of the origins and diversification of the Southern Hemisphere floras. However, it will be some time before the new plantings achieve the stature and magnificence of the existing forest sentinels.

## Events in the Gardens

From Lynda Burns, Visitor Services Team Leader.  
941 7585

Coming events include:

**Burst of spring!** – a Festival of Flowers event. Free live entertainment with music, poetry and clowns for the kids. At the Band Rotunda. Sunday 12 September, 11.00 am to 2.00 pm. Postponement date: Sunday 19 September

**Tell-tale trees.** Children's discovery trail. Discover some tall but true tales about our magnificent trees. Pick up the free guides from the Information Centre Saturday 25 September to Sunday 10 October.

**NZ's most unwanted – Weeds on the run.** Learn how to stop exotic weeds escaping from your garden at this educational display. Free viewing at the Information Centre during opening hours. September and October.

**Design for home gardens using native plants.** Curator John Clemens will demonstrate using native plants in formal design as well as naturalistic settings. Meet at the Information Centre Saturday 30 October 3.00 to 3.30 pm

**Kitchen Garden Sessions.** A practical workshop for home gardening in spring and summer. \$20.00. Bookings essential. Phone 941 7590 or email [christchurchbotanicgardens@ccc.govt.nz](mailto:christchurchbotanicgardens@ccc.govt.nz) Saturday 16 October and Wednesday 20 October - 3 hour session times to be confirmed.

**Escape from the Zoo.** This Heritage Week event weaves the history of the Acclimatisation Grounds in Hagley Park into a short entertaining busker-style show. Meet at the Band Rotunda for a prompt start. Free event but bookings are recommended via the Beca Heritage Week website – [www.heritageweek.co.nz](http://www.heritageweek.co.nz) 28, 29 and 30 October - shows at 5pm, 6pm and 7pm.

### New season's daily walks

The seasonal daily guided walks with a Friends of the Gardens guide resume from Sunday 19 September. The walks start at the Canterbury Museum gates on Rolleston Avenue at 1.30pm and finish at approximately 3.00pm.

**An upside-down start to a new life.** Explore the history of the V-huts and their use by early settlers with Brian Appleton, Christchurch Botanic Gardens Ranger. This tour includes a visit to the Barker hut in the Canterbury Museum and a walk to one of the sites where the A-framed V huts were erected. Meet at the Canterbury Museum gates on Rolleston Avenue.

Sunday 24 October, Friday 29 October, 1.30 to 3.00 pm.

### Caterpillar Garden Tours – extended hours

Vehicle tours will depart every half hour from both the Canterbury Museum and the Information Centre daily between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm.

### One bridge too many?

We have all accepted that the new Visitors Centre will have a temporary bridge built that will handle the heavy loads required for the construction. Then we have accepted that it will be demolished because it is to be only temporary and its resource consent will require that.

And we know that the new Visitors Centre and the Gardens operational facility is designed to have a bridge access to take heavy loads where the temporary one will be. The Visitors Centre will not function as its design requires without that bridge access. So a new permanent bridge is required as soon as the temporary bridge is removed. The cost of the temporary bridge has to come from the \$11m budgeted for the whole project.

The rationale for this apparently nonsensical process was that getting consents (and presumably funding) for the permanent bridge would delay the building of the Centre. The processes are man-made and thus can be un-made. If the cost of the temporary bridge was put towards the cost of a permanent bridge, what would the short-fall be? Has the question been asked? And if the difference can be met and the man-made consent process sorted, wouldn't it make sense to build just one bridge?

We'll be asking these questions and applying some pressure for some common sense. Perhaps a new Council will have some!

Alan Morgan

# Articles

## Springtime in China

The whole of April I was in China watching the emergence of spring, from Hong Kong in the south to Beijing in the north, and then a week in the western province of Sichuan, where my husband Bill was born and grew up in the 1930s and '40s. From Chengdu we took day trips to the ancient irrigation system at Dujiangyan, where the Min River emerges from the mountains onto the rice plain, to Meishan on the plains, to Leshan, where the largest monolithic Buddha in the world sits peacefully in the red cliffs on the foothills of the Tibetan plateau guarding the treacherous confluence of three rivers. Then to Mt. Emei, one of the greatest botanical treasure houses in China.

Once that intimate tour was completed and our little family had flown home from Shanghai, we met up with 22 fellow Cantabrians, two from Te Awamutu, four from Boston, and one from Kuala Lumpur before setting off on a garden tour of the Yangtze Delta and then south to Guilin and Yangshuo on the Li River.

At the beginning of April, temperate continental spring in Beijing required warm jackets and jeans for a daily high between 9 and 15C. The ground looked parched and brown, no streams were running, but our guides assured us there had been a bit more rain than usual despite a recent sandstorm from Inner Mongolia. Commanding the entrance to our hotel near Tiananmen Square were two enormous white *Magnolia denudata* flanked by two *Pinus tabulaeformis*, the ubiquitous two-needled pine of northern China. The trees reached two storeys and looked majestic against the grey building. I could not recall seeing twinned pine and magnolia in New Zealand, but then, I'd never seen a magnolia high enough to stand by a tall pine in this country.

*Prunus mume*, the iconic late-winter plum, had long finished blooming by April, but in the private Palace garden at the back of the Forbidden City, local visitors lined up to have their photos taken beside the dwarf peach hybrids, *Prunus persica*, sacred spring trees in China and one of the most popular motifs in Chinese art. Later in the month, in the old Southern Song Dynasty imperial capital of Hangzhou (AD1127-1279), the Bai Causeway across West Lake - the prototype for every garden lake or pond to this day - is awash each spring with pink peach

blossom laced with the apple green of newly opened weeping willows, *Salix babylonica*. The low-lying mists on lake and trees present a landscape of watercolours, the stuff of poems and paintings to the garden-makers of old.

*Forsythia suspense* is an early spring glory in Beijing. I've always thought it difficult to find a compatible companion for its outrageous yet uplifting yellow, and the Chinese don't even try. One sees it repeatedly in parks and along highways, separate groups of maybe a dozen plants limbed up to half a meter and webbed together in a great clipped sunburst no higher than 1.5 meters. What a show.

From the top of Coal Hill behind the Forbidden City, the view is of the full 9,999 golden-roofed rooms within the high-walled Imperial Palace. Originally it was part of the emperor's private gardens, and today its warm southern slopes are clothed in local trees, *Pinus bungeana*, the royal lace-bark pine, in particular. Also there is *Sophora japonica*, the yellow-flowering Chinese scholar tree, and still clinging to life is the original sophora on which the last Ming emperor hung himself in 1644.

Beneath these trees many new flower beds are filled with Mudan, the tree peony, *P. suffruticosa*). On the northern flats behind Coal Hill, a full acre of Mudan are laid out in formal, raised beds, which will be blooming this month. Chinese garden specialist Peter Valder writes, "Probably no flower in China has ever surpassed the tree peony in winning and holding public esteem....It is regarded as "the king of flowers", a symbol of love, honour, riches and aristocracy as well as an emblem of affection and feminine beauty." Tree peonies are still grown for medicinal properties extracted from the roots and more recently for Mudan wine.

In West China, the viburnum claimed centre stage, and it stayed in the limelight right across to the east coast, in particular the robust shrubby trees of *V. macrocephalum f. macrocephalum*. Heavily laden with sterile snowball flowers, the early lime-green blooms change to white as they mature. In Yangzhou, some avenues of this viburnum were mixed with *V. odoratissimum* and *V. macrocephalum f. keteleer*, the Jade Flower, which has an outside circle of sterile flowers surrounding a fertile cushion of buds, very like the lace-cap hydrangea.

Because of its long flowering season, the crepe myrtle, *Lagerstroemia indica*, is known in China as "Hundred Days Red". It's cold-hardy, the only one of the genus to be so, and I saw its buds popping out of its brilliantly striated, lacquer-like bark everywhere we went, but particularly in a splendid park at Dujiangyan near Chengdu, where a special section in the garden was devoted to its beauty. Clipped shrubs, handsome trees, miniaturised as *penjing* in pots, best of all were five saplings planted in a line and braided together as they grew so that their conjoined shining grainy trunks looked like latticework.

What is it the Chinese do in their design that really takes your breath away? "They consider the heart," I wrote in my diary, "and combine mostly trees and shrubs in exquisite combination. They're not afraid to plant big trees close together, and they juxtapose them with lots of clipped shrubs in different textures and colours: junipers and lorapetalum, rounded shapes at different heights with big rocks.

A copse of crabapples had just finished blooming there. I saw them again in the old temple gardens at Mt. Emei. Crabapple blossom is a favourite in Chinese art, regarded as an emblem of feminine beauty. Bright pink and red azaleas are everywhere in April pots, especially on Mt. Emei. They've never been a favourite for Chinese gardeners, although in the West a veritable mania for all forms of rhododendron continued for a century from the mid-1800s.

From Shanghai airport to the inner city, a labyrinth of spaghetti junctions is greened by swathes of plants that cope well with heat and dust and shade. Hundreds of miles of flower boxes line the balustrades of elevated highways, thickly planted with *Jasminum nudiflorum*, which droops yellow flowers through winter. In the shadows on the roads beneath, aspidistra flourishes, and so does *Fatsia japonica* and evergreen azaleas.

The first traditional garden on our tour was new to me: Guyiyuan in Shanghai is a traditional scholar-official's garden with rock mountainscape and pond. Chen Congzhou (1918-2000) was an authority on heritage and the preservation of both architecture and gardens; I was keen to see the "Ancient Garden of Elegance" that he had restored.

It was Sunday, and families were enjoying spring sunshine and a children's playground in the adjacent public park. A small peach orchard in full pink came into view, and through a moon gate we entered a *penjing* courtyard, the Chinese precursor to

bonsai in Japan's Zen tradition. We had Jan Simmons from Timaru, a specialist in the art, and she, like most of us, had a rush to the heart at the perfection of a copse of burgundy lorapetalum in a shallow bowl, and centurion junipers who remembered the birth of the Republic of China in 1911. A pavilion housed the local spring orchid competition, and orchid poetry was displayed on scrolls.

*Nandina domestica*, commonly known as sacred or heavenly bamboo, is in every garden. Its elegant form belongs to the berberis family, not a true bamboo. Small white flowers emerge from a ruddy-bronze haze of new foliage, and later, in winter, each flower produces a 2-seeded red berry.

In most people's minds, bamboo spontaneously equates with China, which is home to an unbelievably large variety. Reference to it goes back to the Book of Odes, 11<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. We saw bamboos on Mt. Emei, in a temple park at Meishan, in the Ge Yuan (Bamboo Garden) in Yangzhou and phoenix bamboo along the Li River in Guilin. Tagging takes on a new beauty when Chinese characters are carved into the culms of giant green bamboos.

From Sichuan to Shanghai, enormous trees of the fabulous *Paulownia fortunei* were in full bloom in vibrant variations ranging from cream with a mottled mauve throat in the west to deep violet in the east. Trees hung out over the stone walls along the Grand Canal in Suzhou, Wuxi and Yangzhou, everywhere their suckers were left long enough to mature. Named for Princess Anna Pavlovnia, daughter of Czar Paul I of Russia, the wood is used for chests and musical instruments, and its bark, leaves and flowers provide a variety of medicines.

Wisteria is China in spring, vistas of blooms hanging in languid lavender over huge rocks, draped over or threaded through bridges, miniature in elegant *penjing* bowls or clambering over ancient dead trees. *W. sinensis*, both white and violet forms, were growing in the Slender West Lake Park in Yangzhou and in the Guyiyuan in Shanghai. This species, most common in China, twines anti-clockwise and its coiled, twisted trunk is one of the symbols for dragons.

Artist and art critic Pat Unger was inspired by the gardens we saw: "Every rock, stone, shell, pebble, pond, bridge, goldfish, lake, flower, shrub and tree had an honourable place in compositions of true harmony. A sense of peace pervaded all."

Diana Madgin

## Warning bells

(The following is based upon an article supplied by Don Bell. The article comes from the parish magazine of the Holy Trinity Church, Llandudno, North Wales.)

John Masefield wrote of a bluebell wood as:

*A miracle unspeakable of flower  
In a green May unutterable blue  
(The bluebells).*

A typical image of a bluebell wood would be a sea of fragrant bluebells beneath graceful beech trees. Fortunately, the bluebell is sufficiently adaptable to grow in other situations as well and at Bodnant Garden (in North Wales) there is an area where they seem to spring directly from a rock face, obviously surviving in very small pockets of soil. On the Great Orme (a coastal hillside area adjacent to Llandudno) bluebells, while not abundant, can be found in various small woods and also in areas of bracken, which will provide the shading effect of a woodland as the new fronds grow.



Native British bluebell *H. non-scripta*

Unfortunately, the British native bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) could now be under threat from illegal collection and from competition with Spanish bluebell (*H. hispanica*). The Spanish bluebell was introduced to the UK as a garden plant in the 17th century and has been popular for its ease of cultivation and large flowers, which may be pale blue, pink or white but which have very little scent.

The Spanish bluebell can be found in the wild and a further potential threat to the native bluebell is hybridization between the two species. Surveys of British bluebells have been performed for the last few years under the direction of the Natural History Museum and charity Plantlife International and it was hoped that the true position of the native bluebell could be determined when the 2009 survey was completed.

The UK is estimated to have between 25 and 50% of the world population of *H. non-scripta* and its conservation is important. British gardeners could help by planting only native bluebells which are known to have been cultivated, and not collected from the wild, and if possible ensuring the original source of these was British.

## The Acclimatisation Gardens

*Thanks to Neil O'Brien for supplying the following article from the "Tourists' Guide to Canterbury" by Mort Davies, published by P. A. Herman, proprietor of Warner's Hotel, Christchurch and printed by the Christchurch Press Co. Ltd, 1902.*

The Acclimatisation Gardens, in which the Museum is situated, are well worth a visit if only for the purpose of noting how well tree growths from all parts of the world flourish in this climate. They, and Hagley Park which surrounds them, are more relics of the old provincial days, and it is to be regretted that there are no public funds with which to keep them in better order, all the money available for that purpose being derived from the sales of young trout, of which there is a large hatchery in the Gardens, and the money received by the Acclimatisation Society for rod and gun licenses. But be that as it may, a stroll round the Gardens, surrounded in three directions by the pretty Avon, which here looks at its best, is well worth taking. Another good stroll is round the various portions of Hagley Park, the veritable lungs of the city, with its fine plantation of pines, oaks, elm, and ash.



### Art in the Gardens: Dinosaurs

This bright eye-catching creation was made by Dennis Pearson.

Dennis was born in Wisconsin, USA in 1939 and attended the Art School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin where he painted and also produced sculptures and leaded, stained glass. He also repaired Corvette cars with fibreglass in his brother's workshops. He began making his "beasties" applying fibreglass over papier maché and painting them in bright colours and patterns. His beasties are on show in the USA, Belgium, Israel, NZ and Mexico and there were a herd of them on the White House lawn in 1987. He now lives in Nelson for most of the year where he enjoys the culture, beautiful landscape and rich materials and works on jewellery design, painted furniture, lead glass, steel sculptures, landscapes and of course Beasties.

Barbara Brailsford and Faye Fleming

### Look at that tree

#### *Styphnolobium (Sophora) japonicum 'pendula'* (Chinese scholar tree, pagoda tree.)

In her article appearing earlier in this Newsletter, Diana Madgin refers to *Sophora japonica*, the Chinese scholar tree. She mentions the original sophora still clinging to life, behind the Forbidden City in Beijing, on which the last Ming emperor hung himself in 1644.

Taxonomists seem to delight in changing the names of plants. And in recent years the pagoda tree has been the subject of their name-changing ways. They have identified three or four species that were formerly called *Sophora* as being sufficiently different to require a different genus name. As a result *Sophora japonica* has now become *Styphnolobium japonica*. (Apparently however, not all taxonomists are happy with the change.)

*S. japonica* lies within the pea family Fabaceae. The species of *Styphnolobium* differ from *Sophora* in lacking the ability to form symbioses with rhizobia (nitrogen-fixing bacteria) on their roots. Despite its species name it is native to China – it was introduced to Japan.

*S. japonica* is a popular ornamental tree in Europe, North America and South Africa, grown for its white flowers, borne in late summer after most other flowering trees have long finished flowering. It grows into a lofty tree 10-20 m tall with an equal spread, and produces a fine, dark brown timber. It is also widely used in bonsai gardening. The flowers resemble somewhat those of *Robinia* and are unlike the yellow flowers of the New Zealand sophoras.

*S. japonicum* is one of the 50 fundamental herbs used in traditional Chinese medicine.

The variety 'pendula' is a strongly weeping form, useful as an accent plant due to its flowing, pendulous branches that are elegant with age. It rarely if ever produces flowers. There is a specimen in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. You will find it growing in the small circular garden in front of the gate in the brick wall leading into Christ's College – this is the garden that has the colourful display the flag irises each November.





# Friends News

## Annual General Meeting Sunday 22nd August 2010

The twentieth annual general meeting of the Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens was held in the Canterbury Horticultural Centre. Twenty-eight members, and one visitor, attended the meeting.

The election of officers proceeded smoothly. Alan Morgan will continue as President for another year. Full details of the Committee are given below.

The President's report covered a number of issues and developments. Perhaps the four most significant developments that are underway or about to happen are the construction of the new Botanic Gardens Centre (intended completion date, 2013), the formation of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Charitable Trust, the 150th anniversary of the Gardens in 2013 and the Australasian Volunteer Guides in Botanic Gardens Conference which will also be held in Christchurch in 2013.

The guiding service provided by the Friends is in good heart, and visitors to the gardens will be pointed to the service by a bright, new sign. The price of a tour has been increased to \$10.00. It is felt that a tour of the quality given by the guides is still a bargain at that price, and a price that can be borne by the client base (principally overseas visitors). The guides are looking to get new recruits to the service, and appropriate training sessions will be arranged for newcomers. The guides will play a major role in the organisation of the Australasian Volunteer Guides in Botanic Gardens Conference.

The other major service provided by the Friends is the propagation team, and this continues to be a significant source of income for the Friends through the plant sales held through the year.

Short presentations were made by the Curator, Dr. John Clemens, and the Botanic Gardens Botanical Services Manager, Jeremy Hawker. The Curator has developed a strong relationship with the Friends during his first year in the job. With regard to development of the gardens, he is heavily involved in plans for the new centre and of course with activities for the maintenance and development of collections, garden layout and design. Mr. Hawker pointed out that the Gardens are one of the most popular attractions in the city, and outlined

some of the almost bewildering array of practical concerns demanding attention in order for the Gardens to function well from day to day.

The meeting ended with afternoon tea and the traditional raffle, the latter being held before tea in order to ensure an efficient and effective distribution of prizes!

The Committee elected at the meeting is:

Alan Morgan, President  
 Charles Graham, Vice President  
 Don Bell, Immediate Past President  
 Secretary, Alan Hart  
 Treasurer, Gwenda Murfitt - this is a temporary appointment  
 Other members of the committee: Ruby Coleman, Leith McMurray, David Moyle, Diane Percy,

Alan Hart

## Guiding in Numbers

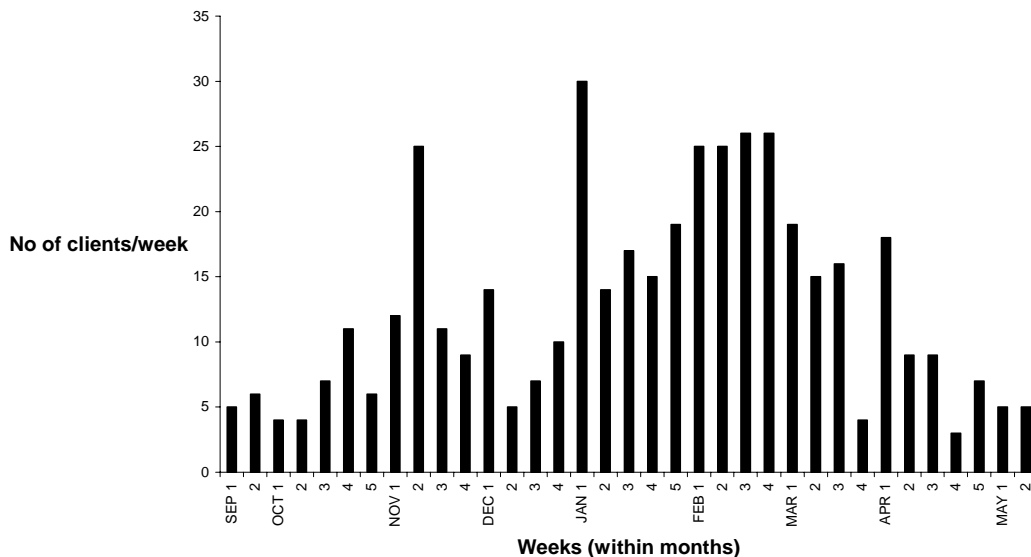
Every day, between about mid-September and mid-May, if you go the Canterbury Museum gates just before 1.30 pm you will find a Guide ready to take you on a walking tour of the Botanic Gardens. If you take a tour (and I trust you have done so!) you will be asked where you come from. This kind of information will be recorded, as will the number of people taking the tour that day, to help form a body of statistics about the guided tours. These statistics allow interesting and valuable insights into the guiding programme that can be used in discussions by the Guides about the service they provide and by the wider Botanic Gardens community about the operation and funding of the Gardens.

The season for 2009-2010 has finished, so what can be learnt from the data that have been gathered? The season ran for 244 days in 2009-2010, as it did in 2008-2009. The total number of clients in the 2009-2010 season was 446, making an average attendance of 1.8 clients per day. The number of clients in the 2008-2009 season was 496, making an average of 2.0 clients per day. There were, sadly, lots of days when no-one turned up. There 98 such days in the 2009-1010 season. If we allow for these,

then for the days when clients came, there were, on average, 3.1 clients per day. For the 2008-2009 season no-one turned up on 87 days, so there were 3.2 clients per day for those days when clients came.

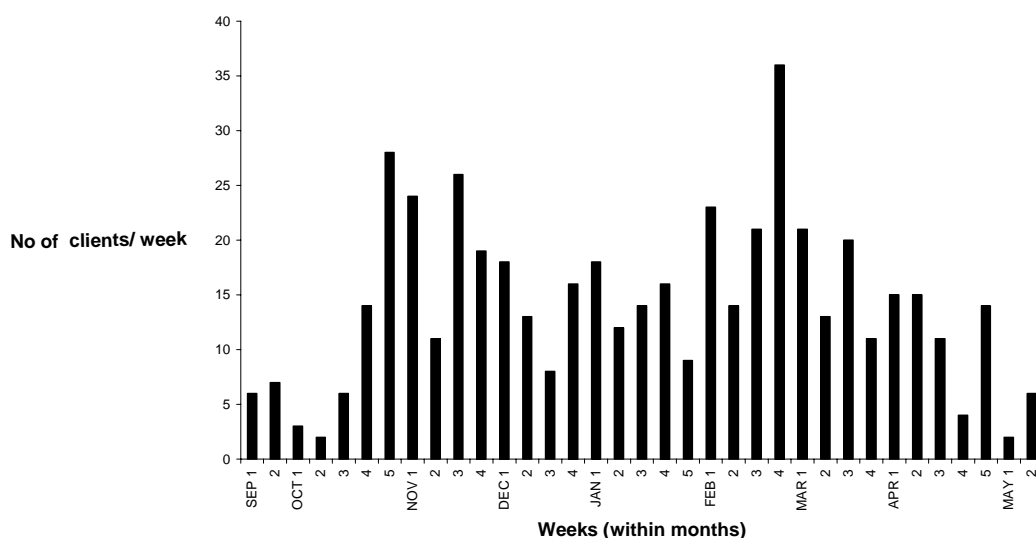
When do clients come? Is there any pattern to their arrival through the season - do more come at some times than at others?

Figure 1: No of clients/ week, 2009-2010



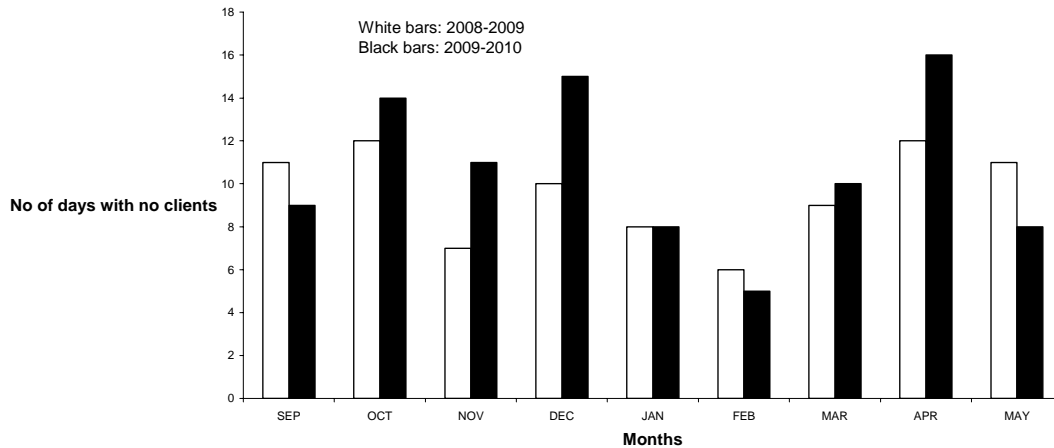
If we look at Figure 1, it appears as if most clients during the 2009-2010 season came during the height of the summer, with occasional high numbers at other times. In the 2008-2009 season there seems to have been something of a peak in client numbers round about November and then again at the end of February (Figure 2).

Figure 2: No of clients/ week, 2008-2009



The distribution of "days with no clients" for both the 2009-2010 and 2008 - 2009 seasons is shown in Figure 3. (Bear in mind that there were only two guiding weeks in September and May- if these weeks were representative of the entire month then the number of days without clients would be about double those shown.)

Figure 3: No of days/ month with no clients



The number of days with no clients is at a minimum during the summer months, consistent with the generally greater number of clients then. It's worth noting that the number of days with no clients was smaller in the 2008-2009 season, consistent with the greater number of clients in that season.

Where do our clients come from? Figure 4 is a pie chart which shows that in the 2009-2010 season the three principal sources of our clients were the UK, the USA and Australia.

Figure 4: Origin of clients, 2009-2010

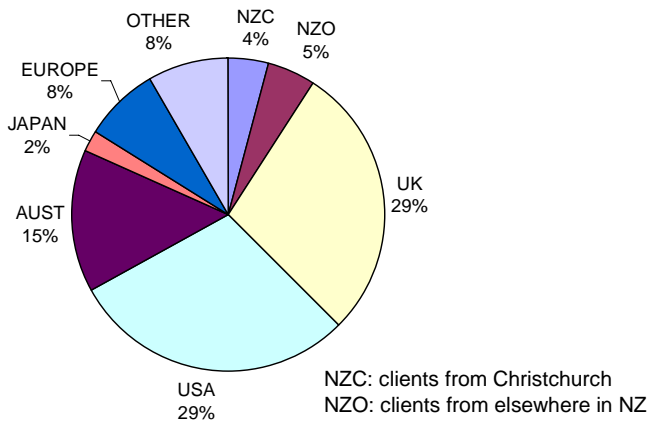
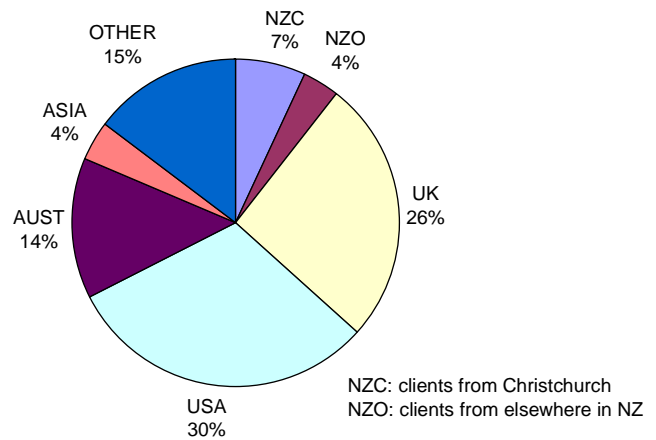


Figure 5: Origin of clients, 2008-2009



The sources of visitors in 2008-2009 were similar (Figure 5).

We are obviously very dependent on the overseas tourist trade. It would be good if more visitors from other parts of NZ came to be guided round the Gardens and, of course, it would be especially pleasing if people living in Christchurch took a tour from time to time. They can come to the gardens free at any time but they are missing out on all sorts of interesting information by not coming on the tours.

The percentage of Australian visitors (14 - 15%) is lower than the percentage of Australian visitors in the tourist population of the region. In 2008, 36.2% of visits to Canterbury were by Australians, 16.4 % by people from the UK, and 8.6% by people from the USA (Ministry of Tourism). A comparison of these percentages with those in Figures 4 and 5 suggests our visitors are not drawn at random from the tourist population. In other words, there is a suggestion we service a specialised market, with visitors from the UK and USA showing a particular interest in the Botanic Gardens.

Are we affected by Caterpillar Garden Tours? It's easy to see them as being in competition with us but it is

an open question as to whether they are. The Caterpillar tours started on January 24th 2009. If we look at Figure 2 past this date, and then at Figure 1, there's no obvious trend which could be attributed to the Caterpillar. The Caterpillar tours may take clients who would otherwise come on a walking tour. On the other hand, the Caterpillar and the Guides may be attracting clients from different groups of people.

Sometimes clients come as specific tour groups round the Gardens. In 2009-2010, 109 people were shown round the Gardens in such groups, the corresponding figure for 2008-2009 being 67.

Extra tours have been provided in mornings in an effort to attract more clients. In January 2009 the morning tours attracted 25 clients compared to 40 in the afternoon. In February 2009, the morning tours attracted 32 clients, 56 in the afternoon. In February 2010, 15 people came in the morning, compared to 87 in the afternoon. We need more data to decide whether morning tours are worth the effort.

I have only discussed data from two guiding seasons. As we gather data from more seasons, it will become possible to look more closely at changes over time, and to increase the validity of my conclusions, which are:

- Numbers of people taking a tour are usually small.
- There are many days when no-one comes on a tour. It would be good to have people come every day. Having even only one person turn up avoids disappointment on the part of the Guides.
- If more local people took tours, this could go a long way to improving our attendance records
- Most clients come over the January-February period. There has also been something of a peak round about November.

The Guiding service is very dependent on tourists from the UK, USA and Australia.

Alan Hart

#### Would you like to become a guide in the Botanic Gardens?

The Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens provide a guiding service which takes visitors to the Gardens on walking tours from mid-May to mid-September. Guides are expected to take two tours a month, each tour lasting one and a half hours.

Plans are being made to train a new group of Guides. If you would like to be a Guide and undergo a training course (about 45 hours) to become one, please send your contact details to

**friendsofthegardens@gmail.com**

and you will be contacted in October 2010 with further details.

#### Friends Notices:

#### We need a Treasurer!

The current Treasurer of the Committee of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens has tendered her resignation.

The Committee would very much like to hear from anyone who would like to fill this role. If you would like to take up this vital job, to learn more about what the position entails contact Gwenda Murfitt at 021 176 5826, 981 3124 (evenings) or [murfitt@paradise.net.nz](mailto:murfitt@paradise.net.nz).

Please send your contact details to P O Box 2553, Christchurch, 8140 or to **friendsofthegardens@gmail.com**, putting Treasurer in the subject line.

Contact Numbers

*Committee*

President	Alan Morgan	384-9976
Vice President	Charles Graham	348-5896
Immediate Past President	Don Bell	343-6699
Treasurer	Gwenda Murfitt	981 3124
Membership Secretary	Ruby Coleman	355-8811
Minutes Secretary	Alan Hart	332-6120
Other Committee Members	David Moyle	358-8914
	Diane Percy	385-6769
	Leith McMurray	337 2008
Ex Officio	John Clemens	

*Helpers*

Plant Sale	Helen Constable	980-9358
Membership database	Philippa Graham	348-5896
Newsletter Editor	Bill Whitmore	339-8356
Newsletter formatting	Maria Adamski	
Newsletter mail out	Glenys Foster	376-5417
News media contact	Jim Crook	358-5845
Botanist	Bill Sykes	366-3844
Guide Co-ordinator	Pat Whitman	384-3475

*Enquiries*

Info Centre 941-6840 x 7590

**Daffodil Day at Otahuna Lodge**

224 Rhodes Road, Tai Tapu, 19 September, 10am-4pm

Adults \$15 Children \$5 (cash only)  
 Tickets available at the gate.

Ticket price includes:

- Admission to 30 acres of gardens
  - Tea and canapés in the garden
  - Donation to the Cancer Society
    - Musical entertainment
    - Guided garden tours
- Picnics welcome

Cancellation: Newstalk ZB  
 Contact: 329 6333  
[www.otahuna.co.nz](http://www.otahuna.co.nz)

Christchurch Botanic Gardens Inc  
 PO Box 2553  
 Christchurch

OR [friendsofthegardens@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofthegardens@gmail.com)