

# Newsletter

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

No 107, Autumn 2017

## President's Report

Our Christmas break is over and the Friend's Committee has already been busy organising a series of "Events" for the coming year. We have moved our Sunday talks/walks to 4pm to take the pressure off car parking and not cut into the weekend too much. We are also trialling a Friday morning time slot during the winter months of May and July. We would love to see more of you at these events to support your Committee and enjoy the variety of very interesting speakers who give their time to share their expertise around things "botanical".



Adrienne Moore receiving her 'Life Membership' award from Andrew Rutledge and Alan Morgan at the Christmas function.

Our combined Christmas party and 'Life member' award function was a huge success celebrated by a large turnout of Friends.

If anyone can assist the Committee by helping with morning/afternoon teas on these occasions it would be much appreciated. If you can help at any of these events please get in touch with Penny Martin at [graememartin1@xtra.co.nz](mailto:graememartin1@xtra.co.nz)

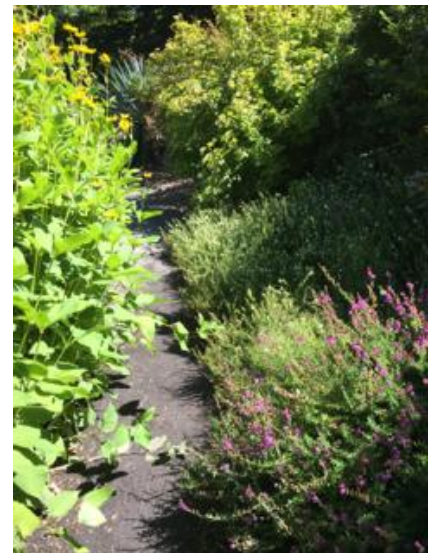
Thank you to all those members who replied to our recent survey. We received twenty-six replies, which do not seem many from a one hundred and seventy strong membership. Nine of those returned said they were happy just to support the Friends with their annual subscription and this is an

important contribution towards supporting our lovely Botanic Gardens. Of the seventeen who offered to give practical help in some way, or are currently volunteering, we are very grateful and will contact you directly. Unfortunately, two folk who offered help did not put a name and address on the survey so if you realize that was you, please get in touch with me.

Your Committee is currently in discussion with Andrew Rutledge, Head of Parks, to write a Memorandum of Understanding between the Friends and the Christchurch City Council. This should give us a clearer direction as to how best the Friends can support the Botanic Gardens, both practically and financially.

I would like to congratulate the garden staff who continue to maintain the Gardens as a beautiful haven to visit. I was wandering around the paths in the water garden recently and felt as though I was in a delightfully different world.

Jeanette Christensen



The water garden; yellow flowers of *Silphium perfoliatum* and the delicate pink and white flowers of *Daboecia praegerae* and *Daboecia cantabrica* (alba) line the path.

## Garden News

### From Collection Curator Dean Pendrigh

#### *Veronica/Hebe* Collection

The *Veronica* collection in the Botanic Gardens is a significant new addition of Hebes / Veronicas numbering 162 accessions. The bulk of the collection, around 150 accessions, was donated by Canterbury University, the remainder from private collectors and a few from the DoC nursery at Motukarara.

Previous collections of *Hebe* in the gardens have had a mix of species and cultivars, some collected in the wild, others from nurseries. The significance of the plants in this collection is that most have been wild-sourced, with some species collected from several different locations showing the range of variation that can be observed over the species range. It is good to have this genetic diversity represented.

The collection is located adjacent to the western lawn of the native section. All the plants are now labelled under the new name *Veronica* which is still somewhat controversial. For those of you who still like to use the old name the synonymous name still appears on the label. The interpretation panel donated from funds from the Friends of the Botanic Gardens gives an introduction to the genus and background to the recent name change.



*Veronica stenophylla*

The collection is still a work in progress as we seek out further species to fill a few gaps in the collection, preferably from wild sourced populations.

## Events in the Gardens

**Summer Bandstand** – March, 12.30pm–2pm. Botanic Gardens Central Lawn.

Live music from some of our best brass, silver and pipe bands. FREE.

Sunday 5 Addington Brass Band

Sunday 12 Woolston Brass Academy

Sunday 19 City of Christchurch Highland Pipe Band

Sunday 26 Salvation Army Christchurch City Band

**Autumn Harvest Discovery Trail.** 14-30 April, 10am– 5pm.

Join us in the school holidays on our ever popular trail. We are hunting for plants that are great to eat. Suitable for ages 5-10. Collect your booklet from the Visitor Centre. FREE.

**Jump for Cancer Hagley.** Friday 24 March, 4pm. North Hagley Park. FREE to the public. VIP tickets \$200. This show jumping event will raise funds for the Breast Cancer Foundation with 40 horses and ponies competing. The team at the Botanic Gardens are currently growing masses of pink flowers to decorate the jumps and surrounding area. Limited VIP tickets are available, contact jem.roh@xtra.co.nz

**Celebrating Autumn - Garden Show.** Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 April. 10am – 5pm. Ilex Room & Marquee. FREE

Vibrant flowers and plants from alpines to bonsai; jointly presented by Canterbury Horticultural Society and Christchurch City Council Botanic Gardens. Last year's event featured Edible Canterbury/Ōtākaro Orchard, Christchurch Beautifying Association, Friends of Botanic Gardens, Christchurch Bonsai Society, NZ Alpine Society, Canterbury Orchid Society, Riccarton Horticultural Society, Canterbury Horticultural Society (CHS) Fruit & Vegetable and Chrysanthemum Circles, CHS Combined Garden Clubs and the CHS itself. We are expecting another great turn out for 2017.

**Curators Garden Workshop - Bedding in – Preparing your food garden for winter.** Sun 30 April, 1.00–3.30pm. Curator's House Garden. \$39. Book online at [eventfinda.co.nz](http://eventfinda.co.nz)

Curator Louise Young and sustainability expert Rhys Taylor will share with you the joys and jobs of autumn in the vegetable garden. His workshop will include a practical demonstration on preparing your garden for winter. Discover how to protect winter crops, the best green manures to plant and planning for crop rotation. Finish with a taste of autumn-themed Spanish tapas by renowned restaurateur Javier Garcia.

### **Friends, new and old.**

Don't forget that the Gardens library is here for your use too! This could include researching botanical descriptions, learning to navigate the catalogued collection online or simply perusing our stunning and diverse subject range. Some of the more recent acquisitions (which you have financially contributed to) include:

*Flora of the Cook Islands.* W.R. Sykes.

*Guide to flowering plant families.* Wendy B. Zomlefer.

*Capability Brown and his landscape gardens.* Sarah Rutherford.

*Nepal - An introduction to the natural history, ecology and human environment of the Himalayas.*

Editors Georg Miehe and Colin Pendry.

Feel free to either call or email me to gain access. Although many books may be loaned, some need to remain in the library for various precious reasons. Enjoy!

Sue Molloy, 941-7584, 027 2100885, [Sue.molloy@ccc.govt.nz](mailto:Sue.molloy@ccc.govt.nz)

## **Articles**

### **Look at that plant – Dahlia**

Don't miss the colourful display of dahlias bordering the Central Lawn on the eastern side of the central rose garden. Although not everyone's favourite, dahlias have returned to a greater level of popularity in New Zealand following the introduction of many new cultivars bred by Dr Keith Hammett. These new cultivars have resulted from Dr Hammett's careful hybridisation work, working closely with the Auckland Regional Gardens.

The dahlia border features an extensive collection of New Zealand cultivars but there are also dahlia species. Watch out for the giant tree dahlias at the

back of the collection against the yew hedge; these flower late in the season, around April, provided an early frost does not knock them back first.

In their native habitat, extending from Mexico to Colombia, the Aztecs gave the plant the name *cocoxochitl* from the hollow stems which resemble water pipes. Dahlias are perennials that develop large tuberous roots to store food for the next growing season. The Aztecs used dahlias as a food source rather than for any floral display.



Dahlia border – photo by Phillip Skilton

As members of the large sunflower family (Asteraceae) dahlias are closely related to chrysanthemums, daisies, marigolds, zinnias and dandelions. Few genera can match the diversity that dahlias exhibit. There are at least 27 species and literally thousands of cultivars developed through hybridization. Height of plants can range from several inches to over 20 feet for some species. Flowers come in almost every colour imaginable, can range from thumbnail in size to 12 inches across and bloom from mid-summer until frost arrives. Flower shapes are also quite diverse, ranging from marigold-like to sunflower-like. Dahlia societies recognise 12 groups of cultivars, distinguished primarily by their flowers.

The history of the introduction of dahlias to Europe is confused. Dahlias first reached Europe when Vincente Cervantes of the Botanic Garden of Mexico City sent seeds to Abbe Cavanilles of the Royal Garden at Madrid in 1789. One story recounts that dahlia tubers were later stolen from the Royal Garden and taken to the Jardin du Roi in Paris. Another story however, says that they were imported directly to France by a M. Menoville, who had been sent to Mexico by the French government to smuggle out cochineal insects, a precious source of red dye, protected by the Spanish. The story goes that Menoville sent the tubers to Paris as food for the insects on the journey. Dahlia tubers however are not a proper food for cochineal insect. As a result the insects died, but the tubers were sent on to the Jardin du Roi. The Jardin's curator, André Thouin, saw the dahlia as a possible edible substitute for the potato. They were used as a food to an extent in France and along the Mediterranean coast, but their peculiar flavour limited their adoption. One Victorian described

dahlias as having a “repulsive, nauseous peppery taste which inspires equal disgust to man and beast”.

After Thouin's brief interest in the dahlia as a food source, the plant seems to have disappeared until several decades later. There had been no place for them either in the French formal gardens or the great English landscaped estates of the eighteenth century. But in the early nineteenth century seeds were sent by Lady Bute, wife of the British ambassador in Spain, to England, where they were named after Dr Andreas Dahl, a physician and a pupil of Linnaeus. They were also sent to Berlin where, rather confusingly, they were named georginas after the botanist Johann Georgi. When they returned to the New World, they were known as “Mexican georginas”, and apparently, the name georgina is still used in eastern Europe.



Dahlia border – photo by Phillip Skilton

Napoleon's first wife, Princess Josephine, was one of the first to appreciate the beauty of the flowers. Her collection in the gardens at Malmaison was at one time the finest in existence. When the blooms were at the height of their beauty she invited Marie Louise and her entourage to a garden party. The dahlias were greatly admired but it was made perfectly clear to everyone that it was out of the question to make any attempt to acquire either tuber or bloom from the Empress. One of the ladies-in-waiting who had been denied a bloom, made up her mind that come what may she would have as good a show of the new flowers in her Paris garden. Her lover, a young Polish prince, was given the task of obtaining roots sufficient for the purpose. Knowing the futility of approaching Josephine he asked the gardener who, ignoring any loyalty to his mistress, greedily sold one hundred dahlia roots for a gold louis a piece. The lady boasted of her new acquisitions and in due course some “kind”

friend carried the story to Malmaison. Josephine was exceedingly annoyed, flew into one of her tantrums, sacked the gardener, banned both the prince and his lady from the court and turned her back on the dahlia forever.

Soon dahlias became immensely popular. In 1826 a prize of one thousand pounds was offered for a blue dahlia and one dahlia tuber was reputedly exchanged for a diamond. Victorians enjoyed a showy lack of discretion in their material surroundings and the contemporary style of gardening now fitted dahlias admirably. They now could connect the fashionable new shrubberies with the formal beds of flowers raised in hothouses and “bedded out”. Perhaps this flamboyance was a way of compensating for discretion in so many other spheres of Victorian life.

By the mid-19th century dahlias were a mainstay of many landscapes. In 1850 a dealer in New York was offering over 300 named varieties. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century dahlias were a favourite of Monet in his garden at Giverny in France.

Like many garden flowers, dahlias have fallen in and out of fashion over their 200 years of cultivation in Europe.

All modern dahlias are hybrids between species. The most common hybrids are the products of crossing *Dahlia coccinea* with *Dahlia pinnata*.

As ornamental plants today, dahlias are grown in one of three ways:

- Short cultivars, for use in gardens as bedding plants for a single season, are grown each year from seeds. Seed-grown plants, however, are quite variable with irregular sizes, shapes, colours, and timing of blooms. They also are not very heat tolerant.
- The cultivars grown from tubers tend to be quite large, producing exhibition-sized flowers. They often need support stakes to hold them up. In cooler areas the tubers are dug up in the fall and stored dormant in slightly moist medium at cool temperatures. They can be planted back into the garden the following spring.
- A third method of growing dahlias, from cutting, has become more popular as of late. Dahlias grown from cuttings are selections from seed-grown population that through vegetative propagation (cloning) are quite

uniform. They are used as bedding plants in gardens and as potted plants.

Dahlias have been and continue to be widely used in horticulture, earning a well-deserved reputation as consistent bloomers. Enhancing gardens and adorning arrangements as cut flowers, the dahlia has been acclaimed “queen of the autumn garden” by its admirers.

Bill Whitmore

## Perspectives – Greening Shanghai

China, like Aotearoa, has been a gardening nation throughout its history. Gardens in China were the property of the rich intelligentsia, but today that energetic flare for landscape design has escaped the old confines and permeates the nation’s cities.

In April 2015 a group of us travelled through China on a garden tour. We arrived in Shanghai, one of the great garden cities of the People’s Republic. From the airport and its surrounds, through the spaghetti spirals of the motorways, through the myriad packed streets to our hotel, everywhere, every structure was enhanced by trees and shrubs, clipped and manicured into sinuous multi-coloured hedges along the berms and median strips, mile upon mile of *Jasminum sambac* in planter boxes rising and falling, twisting and turning along motorways. Below them, in the dark strips we leave to the boy racers and rubbish, there are oceans of ferns and fatsias, a forest of shining green foliage.



Flyovers above the “forest”

This was not always the case in Shanghai. In its heyday in the 1920s and ‘30s, and before that, since opium was traded from India by the British for delicious China tea, the city was a filthy expanded town juxtaposed with the wealth and decadence of

merchants and factory tycoons from the West, their opulence protected within guarded city walls.

Eight experts from the Shanghai Municipal Urban and Rural Construction's Science and Technology Committee spoke with us of their specialist fields in the greening of Shanghai: from Chenshan Botanic Garden, from the Urban and Construction Design team, senior experts from Landscaping and City Appearance, greening and sustainability experts --all happy to speak to thirteen ordinary New Zealanders about their extra-ordinary efforts and achievements applauded worldwide.

Deputy Director Guan Wei introduced Hu Yonghong from the Botanic Garden. Shanghai is at the boundary between sub-tropical and warm-temperate climate zones, which means that only certain temperate plants can survive the hot, humid summers. The coastal land is less than three meters above sea level, "so we cannot grow big trees. It's completely flat heavy clay soil, so we need to change the soil before we start."

Public parks are everywhere, the people's gardens in a city of high-rises, places to visit and talk with friends, practice tai-chi, sing, dance, play music, paint, enjoy mah jong and Chinese chess. There are other parks for meditation and quiet.



People's park with forest and "rock mountain scape" and lots of colour

About twenty percent of plants used are locally sourced species and cultivars; the remaining eighty percent are exotic species and cultivars brought in from elsewhere in China as well as from New Zealand, US, Canada. In Christchurch we are familiar with many of the Chinese trees Mr Hu listed as having the right properties for a high water-table, trees that we use or may be looking to use as the water-table in our

own soggy ancient sea-bed zone rises even more precariously with ice-melt from Antarctic waters.

We don't know yet whether Christchurch's Red-Zone planners will be flexible in coupling exotics with natives, but in Shanghai a variety of medium forest trees with shallow rooting systems have been arrestingly combined to fill the city corridors, creating a green carpet of forest at the feet of this sky-scraping city.

Ginkgo forests originated somewhere in the south-eastern Yangtse basin at the time of the dinosaurs. They produce health-giving leaves and delicious kernels. The deciduous *Ginkgo biloba* thrives in heavily polluted air, offering big splashes of butter-yellow foliage in the autumn. *Platanus hispanicus*, the name the Chinese give the London plane tree, is very tough, with shallow roots. Linwood Avenue is a showcase for them in Christchurch.

The dawn redwood, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, an ancient tree from Sichuan, will grow in soggy soil. It was known from fossil records before it was discovered in 1947. The shallow roots of the camphor tree *Cinnamomum camphora*, native to Shanghai, predominates in the landscape. China's iconic *Magnolia denudata* has a long taproot but doesn't like Shanghai's warm winter and muggy atmosphere; the evergreen American import (*Magnolia grandiflora*) does better.

Gao Weihau, Director of the Garden Landscape Division, described a balanced eco-system using the Daoist principle of yin/yang harmony at the heart of landscape design. Harmony manifests in different textures and leaf shapes, positioned so sunshine will light them up and shadows enhance depth. Maples are often mixed with conifers, for example, and tall pine trees frame the lime-green florescence of camphor trees.



Careful planning for texture and colour; maples with conifers

Pollution is a big problem in all Chinese cities. Downtown Shanghai is 3-5 degrees warmer than the suburbs. Solutions are dramatic: more than 10,000 residents have been moved out of the CBD into the suburbs. Only one person in eighteen applicants can get a licence to drive a car. Extensive greenscaping has a significant impact in both cleaning and cooling the atmosphere.

Within the dominating high-rise city-scape, “we have spaces where there will be only buildings, and we must have green spaces where there are no buildings,” Gao said. Large People’s Parks service local residents. “In a city where few families have more than a small balcony on a high-rise, traditional garden features are incorporated into the parks’ design: mountain scapes in microcosm, ponds and lakes. The citizens’ choices must be respected here.”

Universities and technical institutes are training the people who work in this city, reports Gao Weihua, citing ongoing research at East China Normal University which informs the Science and Technology Committee on stable plant species suited to the area. Shanghai is 65% wetland, and a quarter of that is natural wetlands, ten times what the government requires for wetland protection. The city expands by a thousand hectares each year. One-third of the greening costs of these new developments--median strips, highway berms, urban forests, parks--is paid by the state, the remainder by investment companies.

Could our own Garden City learn something from Shanghai’s greening policies? Over twenty years Shanghai has become clean, green and beautiful. Some years ago a senior engineer described to our third garden tour group the plans and problems of such a mammoth undertaking. From one side of the meeting room we looked down on the destruction of old Shanghai’s traditional high-density two-storey homes; from the other side, endless rivers of green trees and shrubs threading in every direction between towering new buildings.

On the face of it, there would seem to be little to compare between a metropolis of twenty-plus million and our city of 350,000. But Christchurch has been torn asunder, and there’s little mention of restoring it as a Garden City, nor is there any public comment from the urban authorities that indicate recognition of its historic status as one of the top garden cities of the world. It’s rare to find anyone in the public service who knows how the city rose to international fame in the

garden world, nor what revenues have been generated by Garden City tourism.

Our former home in the Richmond Riverside Heritage Park plan was demolished two years ago. A team of supporters including Avon-Otakaro Network co-leader Evan Smith, has helped maintain the garden and protected the 1920’s house from vandals as we awaited the formal nod for a heritage trail along the Avon from the estuary to the Ngai Tahu po at the end of Salisbury Street. “It’s our land now,” reiterated a CERA spokeswoman kindly but firmly. “We wondered if you could meet the demolition company so we do as little damage as possible to the garden.”

There’s a glimmer of hope in this statement, although it’s not clear yet what we would be saving the garden for, as we wait now for Red Zone planning. All we see at present is the gobsmacking clearance of “the old dungers”, in Minister Gerry Brownlee’s shameful words.

What can we take from Shanghai about rebuilding our garden city? Shanghai is leading the way internationally by creating a garden city under tough conditions. The compelling mix of sustainable planting and beauty are there for all to see. A comparison can be made between Shanghai’s vulnerable Yangtse estuary landscape and the dramatically changed East Zone of Christchurch, an ancient seabed sunk then risen again in some areas and sunk again in others.

Christchurch now has a vast acreage of empty, unstable coastal land with a high water table. Town planners have to decide whether the East will be our usual spread of homes with uninspiring amenity centres, or whether there will be deliberate policies to incorporate the now world-wide movement for community food gardens, urban forests, cycle-ways, people’s parks and orchards threaded through new suburbs.

Visionary planning remembers the vigour and commitment that drove the re-development of Christchurch at the beginning of the twentieth century when city fathers, like architect and environmentalist Samuel Hurst Seager tackled the unsightly dump this colonial city had become. Men like Hurst Seager are thin on the ground in today’s profit-driven ethos. The catch-cry in the 1906 Great Exhibition was that Christchurch should become a Garden City. Inspired by Ebenezer Howard’s garden-city model for England’s polluted industrial cities, Christchurch set to

work to arouse public support to beautify its streets and gardens.

The institution at the heart of a garden city should be a high-profile botanic garden, recognised both locally and internationally for its horticultural, botanical and environmental expertise. In the 1960s Christchurch Botanic Garden was deemed one of the top ten in the world. Today it faces a declining budget and poor understanding of its role from the city government that funds it. A botanic garden is not just a pretty park, it's a scientific and educational institution linked to other such bodies around the world that promote biodiversity, entomological and botanical research, seed-exchange and the protection of rare and endangered plants.

A bio-dome - as recently proposed - would cost a fortune. It requires huge visitor numbers to be viable. Christchurch would have to pack a resounding punch internationally to excite green and garden-minded tourists to visit this city; remembering Ellerslie, we don't want to have to find ways of raising the money to maintain a bio-dome, like the ice-skating rink in Cornwall's biodome in south-west England. But we do want tourists to experience the yin and the yang of the Christchurch landscape: the established old-style city gardens and English landscape in the north-west, and a sweep of forest and food gardens, hiking and cycling trails, wetlands and unique architecture in the east.

In the 1990s from late spring through summer, bus-loads of Japanese visitors admired our prize-winning competition gardens. At that time New Zealand was a number-one tourist destination for Japan. Today we see hundreds of Chinese tourists coming through the Botanic Garden gates; tens of thousands of Chinese now visit this city each year. If we look after them as well as they care for us in China, many more will want to visit Christchurch.

Our city council must be committed to the Garden City jewel we once were and make an educated and impassioned commitment to support it.

Diana Madgin, Feb 2017

Bob Crowder presents the  
**Alternative facts of the weather for summer 2016/17**

From 20-23 January 2017 New Zealand was hit by a weather bomb which did cause consternation in parts of the country mainly in Western South Island and across middle NZ (Wellington) and led to some amazing headlines on the front page of the Press about the wash-out summer and where has the summer gone? Years ago a fall of 20+ mm rain in a summer month would have created quite different headlines along the lines of a summer blessing for the agriculture industry worth millions of dollars. The resultant summer fresh down the big Plains rivers was regarded as a disaster rather than welcome replenishment for the depleted aquifers which had been the headline news just a few weeks earlier. We have indeed become an urban society with little understanding of the holistic nature of the environment we live in, we grow and consume the bounty of the land but disregard that so much is dependent on the irrigation we are so critical of and the rain we so despise.

Of course the Friends of the Botanic Gardens do still understand the holistic fundamentals on which we rely so what indeed are the facts of January weather wise?

The month came in much as it departed with temperatures up to 30° C in the city area while out on the farm south of Christchurch at Motukarara 34° C was reached, not bad for a "wash out summer". But this was followed by an unsettled spell with some useful rains which varied from place to place due to there being some embedded thunderstorm activity: At Motukarara for example 15mm fell on the 6th in an hour or so but at my site only 3.9mm occurred. The airport also benefited from some deluges while poor old Waipara got caught in some damaging hail in isolated areas much like the farm in Motukarara experienced in a similar November storm. Such events are to be expected in the summer months; some are lucky and escape damage while others benefit and get just the rains. The result was that Christchurch airport had above average January rainfall with 52.8 mm (cf average 43 mm) while my site at the foot of the Port Hills was just below average at 47.5 mm (cf average 48.7 mm). It is interesting to note that despite average rainfall, irrigation would have been necessary to keep your gardens growing and for commercial locally grown fruit and vegetables to be put on the table.



A more settled spell of weather then occurred from 10-19 January with mean maxima over this period of 25.4°C. There was often wind but it is easy to forget that in January thanks to constant NE sea breezes intermixed with the NW, January on average has the highest total wind run of any month; why else would the Canterbury coast not be a favourite beach destination in high summer. During this time evapo-transpiration averaged as much as 5.5 mm water loss a day making the monthly rainfall inconsequential as far as plant growth was concerned.

Then on 20-22 January came that weather bomb, significant for western areas but Christchurch escapes with a useful significant rainfall of 20-30 mm over a wide area. Temperatures did drop significantly with a mean maximum of just 16.7°C over the 3 days, while Cardrona woke on the morning of the 23rd to that 30cm of snow which was a significant event.

But then it was over and the last 9 days saw mean maxima recover to 24.4°C. In all, January had 20 days 20° C or above, with two days at this site reaching over 30 C, while on the farm at Motukarara there were 5 days in excess of 30°C with two days at 34°C .

To finish, this abysmal summer month sunshine at the airport was above average with 247.3 hrs (av. 230 hours).

In conclusion January does not appear to have been so bad: the mean temperature for the month at my site was 17.2°C just above the average of 17.0°C made up of mean maximum of 22.5 C (av. 21.8°C) and minimum of 11.9°C (av. 12.3°C) and with irrigation everything in the garden appears to be doing well. For my garden the greatest success this year has been the loquat harvest and for the first time I have been experimenting with making loquat chutney.

**Art in the Gardens – sculpture in the Old Information centre pond “Diminish and Ascend 2014”**

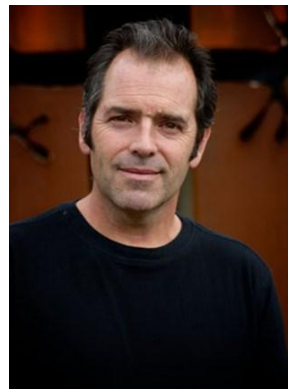
If you had been walking over the bridge leading from the Armagh Street car park into the Gardens on the afternoon of Tuesday 27 September you would not have failed to see a rather elegant sculptured “staircase” made of aluminium suspended high in the sky from a tall crane. It was then carefully lowered and installed in the pond beside the Old Information Centre.



Diminish and Ascend 2014

The sculpture is one of a number presently on display in the city as part of the 2016 season of Scape Public Art. It has the name “Diminish and Ascend” and is the work of sculptor David McCracken.

McCracken is based in Auckland and began sculpting when in his teens. He has worked in a variety of jobs including boat building, welding and woodworking. He has also been involved in the performing arts, including designing and making sets and props for theatre, dance and film production. He saw the potential of steel fabrication for quickly producing large set pieces and at the same time began making sculpture from readily available and inexpensive scrap when he could afford little else. He later furthered his fabrication skills to include aluminium, stainless steel, titanium and corten steel and began casting in bronze and stainless steel.



David McCracken

By 2003 he was sculpting full time. He has received a number of awards for his work and has commissions both in New Zealand and internationally.

“Diminish and Ascend 2014” has previously been displayed at Sculpture by the Sea, Sydney and Sculpture on the Gulf on Waiheke Island. In both places it drew great

attention. At these two sites the sculpture was installed on dry land so having it now installed in a pond gives it a new resonance. While the sculpture is only on temporary display in the Gardens it could presumably become a permanent attraction if there was such an interest and if the necessary funds to purchase it became available.

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. If 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](mailto:graememartin1@xtra.co.nz)

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