

Newsletter

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

No 113, Spring 2018

President's Report for the year ended 30 June 2018

My second year as President of the Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens has flown by with many worthwhile achievements.

Membership.

Our membership stands at 210 with a notable increase in student and young people this year. Thank you to our Membership Secretary Penny Martin for her great work in maintaining our database, it is a large and constant job. Penny organizes introductory walks for new members twice a year and it was pleasing to note that eleven new Friends joined members of the Committee for afternoon tea after being guided through the Gardens and behind the scenes of the Information Centre. Thank you to those of you who have paid your subscriptions and those who gave an extra donation; it is much appreciated by the Committee who will endeavour to use the money for the betterment of the Gardens.

The Committee.

I would like to thank my hard-working team who have combined their knowledge and skills to maintain and grow the Friends' business and activities.

Garry Miln was our only new Committee member this year and we have been a well-oiled team. I am very grateful for the way that everyone has worked together and supported each other in their appointed tasks. As with all volunteer groups we all have time away from time to time and your Committee are very willing and able to step up and take over the reins when this happens.

We were very sorry to lose John Clemens in April this year. John had been our very able ex officio Committee member for eight years keeping us informed and guiding the writing of our Memorandum of Understanding, thus strengthening our relationships with staff and the Christchurch City Council.

This AGM we have decided to increase the size of our Committee to cope with the growing workload as we become more involved with different initiatives.

Activities and Events.

Thanks to Mary Carnegie we have had some very interesting speakers this year including many of the Garden curators. Numbers attending these talk/walks continue to increase including numbers of non-Friends.

It is very pleasing to see many of the Garden curators at these events during our Winter Series on a Friday morning. A special thanks to Mary and Penny, for their hostessing and Graham for taking over the front of house role. Thank you to all those who have helped with morning/afternoon teas for these and other events.

As well as these regular events we had a very successful Christmas party and for the first time hosted a thank you morning tea for Garden staff, Guides and Growing Friends.

Volunteering.

Friends have volunteered for various events and projects throughout the Gardens. During the last twelve months Friends have worked with some of the section curators weeding and deadheading, the Visitors

Experience Team on the “Mission Headquarters” and “Reading in the Wild” projects as well as Kidsfest holiday programmes.

Many have volunteered for Kristina McDonald’s (Bio-diversity Team) with the ongoing Mistletoe project and we have helped Kristina and the Garden Curators prepare for a ‘Backyard Diversity’ project, propagating and potting-on 750 veronica cuttings to give to public participants in the spring.

Horticultural Society Garden Show.

This year we shared a display stand with the CBG where we promoted the Friends and the Horticultural Hub. Guides led half hour themed walks and had many participants over the three days. Much interest was generated in our activities and new Friends signed up for membership. This was a worthwhile activity. Thank you to all who volunteered.

New Initiatives.

In December last year the Friends, combined with the Canterbury Horticultural Society, opened a “Horticulture and Conservation Information Hub” in the Old Information Centre. This was the brainchild of Don Bell who saw a need for this public service. Twenty-four FCBG and CHS volunteers were rostered on to man the Hub Wednesday and Sunday from 1.00-3.00pm. Although we didn’t field many questions each day the numbers grew slowly over the summer months and the volunteers got to meet new people. Over the winter the Hub is alive through the CHS Facebook page HortTalk. We will open the Hub in the Gardens again in October. Thank you to all those who volunteered for the Hub roster and steadfastly turned up for duty.

The Tea Kiosk.

When the Tea Kiosk building came up for renewed occupancy this year the Friends supported a submission by the CHS to use the building for their headquarters. The intent of the submission was to provide a home for a “Thriving, Interactive, Horticultural and Community space”. If successful the Friends would have use of the building and help man the Kiosk for activities such as our talks and Horticultural Hub.

We are waiting for a decision from the Council who recommended the CHS occupancy to the Linwood, Central and Heathcote Community Board. However the Board did not support this recommendation outright and the matter has gone back to the Council staff. We are waiting for a final outcome

Friends are currently backing two other initiatives; firstly funding the compilation of a brochure “Commemorative Trees Walk” in the CBG, and secondly, some interpretative informational panels in the gardens reflecting some of the findings from the Biodiversity survey, which was sponsored by the Friends.

Logo.

The Committee has for some months been working on a new logo for our society. We have finally come up with a design that fulfils the logo requirement and fits with the Canterbury environment. The *Veronica laudiana* (Banks Peninsula sun hebe) is one of nine endemic plants to Canterbury and is now only found on the Port Hills. The colours used in the logo fit with the CCC colours for the CBG. Many thanks for our logo design from Kirsty Cullen Graphic Design who has donated her time and expertise for free.

Bi-annual Study/Financial Grant.

In the last financial year we have given a \$1,000.00 grant to the Botanic Garden Trust, our usual donation to the BG Library, books and lock-up boxes for “Reading in the Wild” project, donated towards renewing the children’s interactive board in the Visitors Information Centre and paid for a Bio-diversity survey of the CBG, the first of its kind. We also sponsored a Guide to go to the Australasian Guide Conference in Melbourne.

In April this year we were pleased to have four applications for study grants from the CBG staff: Sue Molloy for Historical Research on “The people and projects of the first 50 years of Botanic Gardens”, Amy Johnston-Bray for the Museums of Aotearoa Conference “Outside Insights”, Keely Kwatkins for one day at the Green Pavlova

Conference and three garden trainees for an educational tour of the Southern Gardens. You will be able to read the results of these grants in the next newsletter.

Newsletter.

A very big thank you to Bill Whitmore (Editor), Tracey Haines (layout) and Penny Martin (distribution) for their continued effort to get our great Newsletter out on time. I am sure we all look forward to reading it. Thank you to those who contribute, with a special mention for Diana Madgin and Bill Whitmore who contribute regular interesting articles.

Guides.

The Guides continue to be the Friends' front line ambassadors. They meet every month to keep their training up-to-date through professional development sessions organised by Faye and Neil Fleming. Thank you Faye, Neil and Pat Whitman for your tireless energy organizing the Guides and to all the Guides for your dedication to the BG.

Propagation.

The two teams of Growing Friends work hard to keep plants stocked and in good condition. Improvements have been made to the glasshouse heating and watering system and there are plans to add benches to elevate plants for easier handling. The plant stand is stocked at least twice a week and two large plant sales are held annually. Thank you to all who volunteer for this very time-consuming work.

The Future.

We look forward to welcoming Wolfgang Bopp, our new Manager of Botanic and Garden Parks, to Christchurch in September and working with him and his staff in many volunteering pursuits.



Wolfgang Bopp

Your Committee submitted a mandate to the CCC Long Term Plan this year asking for funding to be made available for the Gardens. Andrew Rutledge will speak about impending Garden developments as a result of this funding round. We will keep you informed of developments through our Newsletter. Thank you all for your continuing support.

Jeanette Christensen

Garden News

Thanks for help

Hayley Luke, Visitor Experience Officer, Parks Unit wishes to send - "a huge thank you to Friends of the Botanic Gardens' volunteers Vicki, Graham, Ngarita and her grandson Andy for their help with the Botanic Gardens' Dino Detectives trail. Their hard work ensured that the highly popular activity centre was well managed and under control. With over 5,000 people doing the trail over the school holidays, their help was invaluable!"

Christchurch remembers Hiroshima and Nagasaki

By Marcus Coll, Member of the Peace Bell Association

On August 5, over 100 people gathered at the World Peace Bell in Christchurch Botanical Gardens to commemorate the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – 'Hiroshima Day'. Held every year since 1976, the ceremonies are attended by people of all ages, including young children, in an effort to keep alive memories of the horror and destruction that the two nuclear weapons inflicted on Japanese civilians.

This year, Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel spoke of the need to spread peace education to younger generations and the importance of continuing to remember the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Mayor then rang the World Peace Bell initiating a minute's silence at 8:15 Japan time. This was followed by Lucy Hiku singing a song a capella from the perspective of a 7-year-old victim of the Hiroshima bombing. Members of Parliament Dr Megan Woods, Dr Duncan Webb and Ruth Dyson also attended the ceremony, as well as several Christchurch city councillors.

With the lighting of candles and lanterns placed at the bottom of the Peace Bell, acknowledgments were given to all hibakusha around the world, especially in Japan and across the Pacific. Disarmament verification expert Angela Woodward spoke of the current state of arms proliferation across the nine nuclear-armed states and their moves to upgrade their respective nuclear arsenals. New Zealand stands firm in its rejection

of nuclear deterrence and remains strongly committed to its iconic nuclear-free legislation introduced in 1987. On August 1, New Zealand became the 14th country to ratify the United Nations Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons. The treaty, negotiated in July 2017, was agreed to by 122 nations calling for a ban on all aspects of nuclear weapons, including their use and threat of use.

Christchurch has a long history as a bastion of anti-nuclear activity, becoming New Zealand's first nuclear-free city in 1982, and the country's first 'Peace City' in 2002. At this year's Hiroshima Day ceremony, the children of Elsie Locke, one of Christchurch's most prominent peace activists, spoke of the importance of continuing her legacy of promoting peace. The World Peace Bell was unveiled in the heart of the central city's botanical gardens in 2006 and has served as a site to commemorate significant days for peace throughout the year. This year's commemorations ended with the Japanese Woman's Choir singing two songs of memorial. People were then invited to ring the Peace Bell and place flowers in the River Avon in tribute to the victims of the atomic bombings some 73 years ago.



Mayor Lianne Dalziel rings the Peace Bell

Articles

New Zealand gardens through English eyes.

This article is by young Englishman William Stanger who is in New Zealand for an extended stay. He has visited and worked in various gardens. In May he was at the Otari native plant garden and planned after that to spend a week at Paloma gardens, then a month at Ayrliies Garden before finishing at Pukeiti.

His qualifications are; MA Historic Designed Landscapes (Merit), BSc Hons 1st Class Green Space Management, Professional Gardeners' Guild Diploma (Thenford Arboretum, Savill Garden, The Garden House, (Devon)(Distinction)).

He started planning the trip back in 2016 and his sponsors are; the RHS, Merlin Trust, Rhododendron Group (RHS), Hardy Plant Society, and Plant Heritage Devon Group. William's main areas of study in this country are; NZ natives (interesting facts, ecology, garden worthiness), NZ bred rhododendrons and magnolias, large leaved rhododendrons.

One of the aims of my trip to New Zealand is to see how gardens compare to those back home in the U.K. Historically British and other European settlers brought over their treasured plants and design philosophy to N.Z. Consequently, I feel very much at home in many N.Z. gardens as they are a variation of European design. Ohinetahi and Trotts Garden are marvellous places that display historical elements found in British gardens including herbaceous borders, knot gardens and a collection of rare and unusual plants. More contemporary European design can be found at Flaxmere where the owner has skilfully created an area inspired by the work of Piet Oudolf.

The quality of maintenance and execution of design give even the best of British gardens a run for their money. What also makes these gardens so comparable to those in Britain is their sense of maturity. Despite being so much younger the growth rate of European trees in N.Z. such as *Quercus robur* gives the impression that a garden has a longer history than it actually possesses. Another factor that would make British gardeners envious is that some parts of N.Z. can grow a much

broader range of plants. British gardeners would make a fuss over just one *Cardiocrinum giganteum* in flower. At Dunedin Botanic Garden they almost grow like a weed.

While the gardens mentioned so far are wonderful places to visit I am looking for gardens that exhibit a unique and distinctive N.Z. style. I have felt so at home in some N.Z. gardens that I forgot I was in a different country or even another continent. I have heard that there is a growing trend in N.Z. to use the native plants and the approach has generally been very purist. Many of the native plantings I have seen tend to be ecologically based mimicking plant communities found in the natural environment. Another common occurrence is that the native plantings are kept in a separate area to the exotics. I have encountered few instances where exotic and native plants have been deliberately mixed with each other.



David Hobbs garden at Broadfield

Contrary to the above, the delightful gardens of David Hobbs at Broadfield and Jill and Richard Simpson at Fishermans Bay both have artfully planted areas just using natives. The use of different foliage texture and colour can create striking effects without an overreliance on flower power. Broadfield also uses totara for its hedging rather than defaulting to traditional *Taxus baccata*. The totara has worked just as well if not better. There are some areas at Fishermans Bay where

there is some juxtaposition of native and exotic plants. Native grasses such as *Chionochloa flavicans* are mixed with exotic herbaceous perennials including *Helenium* and *Salvia nemorosa*. The bold foliage of native *Cordyline australis* and *Astelia nervosa* is complemented by the architectural flower spikes of *Echium pininana*.

So far I have spent most of my time on the South Island but I'll be heading to the North Island soon to see what treasures await me. My quest for more inspirational gardens continues whilst improving my N.Z. plant knowledge. Then it's off back to Old Blighty with a head full of ideas.

Trainees of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Road Trip - By Tori Taylor

In May a group of trainees from the Christchurch Botanic Gardens ventured south to visit other botanic gardens. Tori Taylor, one of the group, writes about the trip, which was sponsored in part by the Friends

Our trip to Dunedin was an amazing opportunity for the 3 trainees, Heidi, Angela and myself, Tori, to see the gardens of Timaru, Oamaru and Dunedin. Our trip lasted three days from Monday 14 to Wednesday 16 May. It was great to meet other people working in amenity horticulture and to hear what they go through and how they function in their roles! I enjoyed meeting other trainees from the Dunedin Botanic Gardens and discussing the differences between our traineeship and theirs. This trip has also made me aware of how different spaces can be utilised and how unique each garden is, from the terrain available to the accessibility of the gardens. How amazing it is for us to work in a beautiful garden that is right in the heart of our city. After returning from this trip my appreciation for Christchurch Botanic Gardens has grown substantially!

Our first day was spent mostly in the car! We shared the driving along the way, after each stop we would swap around. The first stop we made was at the Timaru Botanic Gardens. The annual bedding displays had just been done, with the familiar sight of wallflowers. We headed into the conservatories where we observed some very familiar plants and others not known to us. For me, *Euphorbia milii* var *splendens* or its common name Crown of Thorns, was a fascinating plant; I never

would have thought a euphorbia needed extra protection!



Euphorbia milii var *splendens* at Timaru Botanic Gardens

It didn't take long to walk around the conservatories, so we headed out and found their education centre which we thought was a fantastic idea.

Not far from their education centre was an amazing eucalyptus tree, which stood out against the lawn it was growing in. We wandered around a bit more before heading back to the car. Only on the way out did we realise just how big these gardens are! Will be back to explore more of them.

Our second stop was at the Oamaru Public Gardens, which blew me away with the quality of the grounds. Everywhere you looked the view was spectacular, the conservatory had beautiful displays and, walking out into the rose garden, the beauty continued. We came across a delightful area with a fountain surrounded by bedding displays, and the trees were all an amazing shade of orange or red or yellow. Not far from this fountain was the river and the setting was picturesque. I ate my lunch here while the other two set off for a café. Then back on the road. We made it to Dunedin around 4pm, plenty of time for settling in and getting dinner.

The next day we headed to the Dunedin Botanic Gardens to meet the staff and have a tour of the grounds. We managed to find our way there - Dunedin is a tricky city when you don't know it! After parking our car at the top of the Gardens we found some staff who then showed us the right way to go to meet the manager, Barbara Wheeler. Once we were in the right place (not really at the right time) Barbara gave us a lot of information about the gardens. We were told of the Garden's

6-star rating with the NZ Gardens Association and the work that goes into keeping it at that level. We discussed the training programs and the differences between Christchurch and Dunedin. They have 9 trainees, one per collection curator and the trainees spend 3 months in one area before moving onto another.

We then joined the entire staff for morning tea. After morning tea two trainees took us out on a tour of the gardens. We spent two hours walking around but it went by very quickly! They have an amazing park, with some fascinating collections. Their rock garden is the largest in the Southern Hemisphere! We visited each collection, from the camellia border to the themed borders, the rose garden, the rhododendron dell, the arboretum and the native section. The rhododendron dell was amazing, with huge rhododendrons under-planted with native plants and topped by old native trees and they worked together wonderfully. The site was originally full of native shrub but David Tannock, who started this project in 1914, cleared away the undergrowth and left the tall trees as shelter and the rest is history. It has turned into a beautiful dell, 4 hectares of it, with the natives still around but the rhododendrons thriving. By the time we made it through the dell time was running short, so we hiked up the hill, through the arboretum and around the native section, which is also huge and finished up in their brand-new nursery. This was very sophisticated and modern! After a quick tour around the nursery our amazing guides had to leave us and head back to work, but the morning spent there was wonderful, educational and we saw many beautiful things.

We then headed off to Larnach Castle. The drive out was lovely, with the ocean stretching out around us, the further onto the peninsula we got. What a place Larnach Castle is. These gardens are the most pristine gardens I have seen, everything is highly maintained, and the castle adds to the grandeur of the grounds (maybe it's the other way around but my favourite was the gardens). The afternoon was a wonderful time of day, with shadows forming and even though the flowers weren't blooming the gardens were still full of amazing specimens and collections that bring interest all year round. We were astounded when we came across some very big, very healthy, nikau palms! This would be the last place, the Dunedin peninsula, to think to find these warm climate plants. The whole collection of tropical plants in

that area is amazing and it felt surreal walking through it, outside!



Strong Nikau palms growing at Larnach Castle

We made our way through the grounds, taking our time and enjoying the sunshine. We then headed into the castle and was blown away again at the quality of it. The restoration was beautifully done, and we enjoyed looking through this historical place, and thinking of what life would have been like living there! It was especially fun going up the windy tower steps to get a view of the grounds and the ocean. Our time spent there was inspiring and will be back to see it in spring!

A big thank you to the Friends for contributing and helping to make this trip happen!

News from the Botanic Gardens' Guides

Number One
Neil and Faye Fleming

The Friends of the Botanic Gardens have two very active volunteer groups within their membership: the *Propagation Group* and the *Guides*. Each newsletter we will try and tell you a little about your guides and how they were trained, who they are, what they do, how they are rostered and who, and how many, visitors they guide in their "season". This first article will describe some of the activities that were used in the training of our guides.

The majority of our guides were trained in 2005 and in 2012 in a 45 hour course. This is the training curriculum that those first two cohorts completed. Notice the mix of social, communication, history, Gardens' management and plant knowledge topics. Although the last topic - plant knowledge - is helpful, the other topics are just as essential to guide visitors in our Botanic Gardens.

danger), disabled, complaints, health attacks...

The 2012 training was from Feb 28th to March 23rd 2005 using 9.30-2.30 on each Monday and Wednesday for a total duration of 45 hours.

We need more Guides

We are still training guides but now we do it using a buddy system where trainee guides learn the skills from our team of trained and experienced guides. If you are interested in guiding let us know and we can help you onto that system. If you are hesitant because you believe that a deep knowledge of plants and their Latin names and families is a prerequisite, read on and you will find that is not the case. The first requirement for any effective guide is the skills involved in communicating with others. That skill comes naturally to some people and can be a struggle for others but it can be learned. If you reflect on some of the training exercises below you may find some familiar skills and some that you have experienced when others have expertly guided you. Here is an example of our training aims.

Being professional Guidelines for Guides

- 1 As we guide, we practise conservation by respecting plants, people and fauna in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens.
- 2 We show respect for the customs and cultures of other ethnic and social groups.
- 3 We show special respect for our own tangata whenua.
- 4 We seek to assist those who want to come with us but are disadvantaged in some way.
- 5 Our language is inclusive of race, religion and sex and we choose not to offend.
- 6 We speak so that we can be heard.
- 7 We recognise and encourage the contributions of others in the groups we guide.
- 8 We cater for the different ways in which people prefer to receive and give information –visual, aural, read/write and kinesthetic.
- 9 We start and finish our tours on time.
- 10 We dress in a professional way.
- 11 We acknowledge the work of other professionals in the Gardens.
- 12 We share information with other guides.



Training the guides

The Guiding Curriculum

The CCC (Curator’s) vision for the Gardens
Christchurch Botanic Gardens’ History
Christchurch history
Canterbury history
Canterbury and Gardens’ geology
Canterbury and Gardens’ climate
Maori history and Maori influences in the Gardens
Fauna in the Gardens
Botanical knowledge
Gardens: Plant knowledge
Gardens: Plant Hunter knowledge
Plants: Anecdotal, interesting information
Plants our visitors know and other Botanic gardens
Management of the Gardens
The work of the Curators - their names and sections
Sections within the Gardens and locating oneself.
Guiding techniques for small groups (2-7)
Guiding techniques for larger groups (7+)
Communication techniques as part of a guiding experience. (95% are tourists)
Interpretation of the Gardens’ environment.
Practical guiding exercises.
Methods for assembling and using Guide information
Seasonal changes and different routes
Greetings for tourists from Non-English countries
Health and safety issues
First Aid
Using the technology – the internet, speakers, safe, cellphone...
Risk Management - Dealing with the unusual and unexpected– latecomers, Gardens closing (wind,

- 13 We are keen to expand our knowledge and our skill-base by continuing our education after our initial training.
- 14 We respect copyright laws and intellectual property rights by buying resources (books) rather than copying large amounts from them.
- 15 We leave our groups better informed, better acquainted with each other, and appreciative of the service we have given.

In each article we will end with a short quiz to test your knowledge. Answers will be in the next Newsletter. This one was used in our training programmes.

Quiz number one.

- 1 What is the approximate latitude of Christchurch?
- 2 What is the population of Christchurch?
- 3 What is the mean annual rainfall of Christchurch in inches and millimetres?
- 4 How large is the Christchurch Botanic Gardens in acres or hectares?
- 5 Christchurch has five sister cities. Name them?
- 6 When was the large Albert Edward oak planted and what was the occasion?
- 7 There is a statue near the Hereford Street entrance. Who does it commemorate and for what was that person noted?
- 8 Who is recognised as the founder of Christchurch City?
- 9 How many peacocks are on the Peacock fountain?
- 10 Where in the Gardens is the pagoda tree?
- 11 What is the main function of groundcover plants?
- 12 What is the name of the row of tall trees on the Archery lawn boundary next to the Herbaceous Border?
- 13 Where in the Gardens was there previously a mini zoo and fish-rearing ponds?
- 14 There are three sand dunes in the Gardens. Where did this sand come from?
- 15 There are half a dozen ponds in the gardens. How did these come into beginning?
- 16 Who was the well known geologist, naturalist and founder of the Canterbury Museum?
- 17 At first the Garden soils lacked organic matter (humus) and were poor in nutrients

but they had one beneficial factor not often found in 1850 Christchurch?

- 18 The Canterbury Plains near Christchurch were largely treeless except for patches. Where were those patches?
- 19 What is the origin of the Avon River and where does it enter the sea?

World Peace Bell Association - Bell Ringing Event Notice

United Nations International Day of Peace
September 21, 2018 at NZ World Peace Bell,
Christchurch Botanic Gardens. Time 3.15 pm.



When the World Peace Bell was gifted to New Zealand in 2004 this was a key event we agreed to put on our bell ringing calendar. For various reasons this agreement has not been satisfactorily fulfilled. In part it is owing to the day having little prominence. That is changing this year. David Bolom Smith has made this official NZWPB event his responsibility. This year's theme is The Right to Peace- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at its 70th anniversary. The United Nations is requesting all nations to live up to this longtime Declaration. The WPB event is timed to enable pupils to attend from Cathedral Grammar School. Christchurch Cathedral Choir boys will attend along with the Japanese Women's Choir. To add to the multicultural element, members of the Fo Guaag

Shan Buddhist community will attend. Local MPs and Councillors have been invited. A message from the UN Secretary General will be read. It is understood Peace Bells in Australia will also honour this day.

Weather notes for winter 2018

Well, it appears spring is well sprung. As I write this on the 25th August the scene outside is a blaze of pink/reddish Japonica blossoms alive with honey bees and that most glorious of spring flowers the lowly violet perfumes the garden. What a perfect spring it has been; indeed, did we ever have a winter?

Some will still be expecting some climatic disaster to eventuate and in fact the greatest snowfall at this low level site against the Port Hills did in fact occur in a September with fruit blossoms in full flower and spring flowers flattened under 20 cm of snow. So be prepared for the worst and hope for the best and keep those frost cloths handy as the chitted potatoes make an early emergence.

Winter did in fact make a brief appearance and the media made a great song and dance about it as we endured just 13 hours sunshine in the first three weeks of June. Lack of sunshine is not indicative of coldness however. Very appropriately real cold winter arrived on 21 June, the winter solstice, followed by the lowest night temperature of the winter to date at this site a -3.1 C screen temperature with -4.4 C on the grass. But as the skies cleared and the nights grew colder so the sun shone and the days grew warmer with the screen temperature reaching 16.4 C by 24 June which brought an eruption of crocuses across the back lawn. Spring had come early and winter was already gone(?) leaving a saturated landscape following rainfall well above average.

July was another mild month and produced just three air frosts at this site with an extreme low of just -1.7 C on the 14th. With above average

sunshine in July there were eleven nights when a slight grass frost occurred helping towards a better chilling factor for plant vernalisation. The 7th was a perfect spring day with a blue dome day giving a maximum close to 20 C (19.8 C at this site). In addition to mildness the month was also drier than average with just 39 mm rain at this site and just 24 mm at the airport. Despite this just small amounts of rain were sufficient to keep the soil close to saturation throughout due to the heavy rainfalls of the summer and autumn and the low evapo-transpiration rates at the time of year.

August to date has continued the July trend. There has been only one additional air frost in August with -1.1 C on the 18th and -3.0 C on the grass, when the average expected is close to 8. To date only seven air frosts have been recorded this winter, the average is 25 at this site.

Rainfall has also followed the July trend with just 26 mm to date, when on average I would expect 83 mm at this site.

But we must remember that rainfall is already close to the annual total with the soil at close to saturation so even small falls such as 10 mm on the 16th and 7 mm on the 23rd can make many soils very wet and sticky for spring cultivation. In addition water tables are very high and with low evaporation levels there is still much surface water for those along the hill fringe. For those on better drained land or on sands it is time to consider cutting out your green crops and letting them lie as mulch to conserve soil moisture in case a true spring drought eventuates and evaporation increases. Also time to reconnect the house down pipes to the water storage tanks (water butts) for use as irrigation as the season advances.

Meanwhile I wait for that last tamarillo to ripen after one of the mildest winters on the record, perhaps a banana will be the next big thing to go for?

Bob Crowder.

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*Enquiries about membership should be made to Penny Martin 332-6866
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Gardens enquiries Information Centre 941-6840 x 7590

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

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