



PRESIDENT'S REPORT WINTER 2021

As I begin my final President's report, I have been reflecting on the past five years at the helm of the Friends' society. My first report was in the summer of 2016 which seems a long time ago but only yesterday.

Since I became president, the Friends' committee has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Christchurch City Council (CCC). This was a significant event as it formalised our Society with the Botanic Gardens and has been a useful tool which we have used when advocating to the CCC to support the Gardens.



1: Andrew Rutledge, Head of Parks; John Clemens, Curator CBGs; Members of the Friends committee; Penny Martin, Mary Carnegie, Charles Etherington, Alan Morgan. Seated: Jeanette Christensen, President FCBG, Karleen Edwards, CEO CCC. This signing took place in October 2017.

We have introduced a formal application process for Botanic Gardens staff to apply for funding from the Friends. A funding application form is sent to staff in April and August each year. Our grants have been used by multiple staff to assist with study, attend conferences, or buy equipment over and above what is funded by CCC. The application process enables us to assess and track these grants. My newsletter reports have documented the activities that we have funded over the last five years and recipients have written newsletter articles or given talks about their experiences.

As well as the on-going funding support for staff and projects, a scholarship fund was set up last year to allow the Botanic Gardens to employ an additional apprentice gardener. The Friends matched a most generous donation from the late

Helen Irvine to the tune of \$50,000 which had been accumulating in our bank account for many years and is money well-spent.

We hope, with public support, that this scholarship will be an ongoing three yearly appointment.

When the Department of Conservation vacated the Old Information Centre early in 2017, it became the Friends' official home and we held monthly talks with an increasing number of attendees, a well-attended Christmas party, and began what was to become a combined staff/Friends Christmas function.

We commissioned a new logo for the society to use on signage and an official letter head was designed for Friends' business. Our grateful thanks to Kirsty Cullen for giving her time to design this logo at no charge.

In November 2017, the Friends combined with the Canterbury Horticultural Society (CHS) to open an Information Hub for the public. This new initiative was led by the late Don Bell and, with the help of twenty-five initial volunteers, we offered this service one day a week.



Veronica laudaiana
Sun Hebe
Endemic to Banks Peninsula
Christchurch



2: Horticultural and Conservation Information Hub.

The following year we were active in supporting the CHS in their bid to secure the successful lease for the Kiosk building which is now our 'home'. With the help of our volunteers, we open the Kiosk to the public on Fridays and Sundays and use this lovely historic building for all our talks and other activities.



3: Our new 'home' the Kiosk building.

I believe that the most significant change over the last five years has been the development of a closer relationship with the Botanic Gardens staff. We now have a permanent presence in the Visitors Centre in the form of a large pictorial blade advertising how we help support the Botanic Gardens. This was commissioned by Wolfgang Bopp, Director of the Botanic Gardens and Garden Parks, because he firmly believes that the Friends are an integral part of the Botanic Gardens.

The number of volunteer hours that we offer the Gardens is also indicative of this relationship. At last count Friends' volunteers were working for the Gardens for 6,040 hours per year. This encompasses 77 volunteers involved in many activities: guiding, propagating plants for sale, helping the section curators with gardening tasks and manning the Kiosk on Friday and Sunday, not to mention casual occasional volunteer roles. Many volunteers work in two or more activities and this number does not include the many hours your committee spends organising the Friends' business.

To the committee, past and present, I thank you for your dedicated support for me and the Botanic

Gardens and the many hours of work that you give so willingly. Thank you for making the Friends the active group it is today. I think you know how much I appreciate your support.

I would like to say a huge thank you to all our Friends for your support over the last five years. For your membership, your wonderful volunteering in our many activities, your support for our events and your belief in me and my wonderful committee.

To Bill Whitmore and Annette Burnett, our fantastic past and present newsletter editors, thank you very much for all your dedicated work and the wonderful newsletter produced every quarter.

To the Parks and Botanic Gardens Managers and their teams: Andrew Rutledge (Head of Parks), Kate Russell (Manager Parks, Programs and Partnerships), Lynda Burns and her Visitor Experience Team, John Clemens and Wolfgang Bopp (past Curator and Director of the BG respectively), and Nicki Brown (Team Leader Heritage Gardens and City Centre) and her team at Mona Vale: you have all been fantastic to work with. Thank you so much for your support.

To all the Botanic Gardens staff: Richard Poole and his team of Section Curators, Bede Nottingham and his Operations Team, Wendy Drew and her team at the Visitors Centre and Sue Molloy who is in charge of archives and the library: I have really enjoyed working with you all and still will be as a volunteer. Thank you for your wonderful support over the years.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to say a very grateful thank you to Murray Dawson, our former web master. Murray set up the website in 2012 and has looked after it ever since, all on a volunteer basis. We are also grateful to Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research for hosting our site on their server for that time.

As I hand over to our very capable Vice President, Jane Cowan-Harris, we have just launched a new Friends' website which Jane initiated. I know the Friends will continue to thrive under her leadership.

Jeanette Christensen



CONTENTS

- P1) Jeanette's final report as the Friends outgoing president.
- P3) Contents and editor's note.
- P4) Friends' new website.
- P4) Friends' new Mona Vale brochure.
- P7) Update from the Director of Christchurch gardens, Wolfgang Bopp.
- P8) Introduction to Breanna Hill, recipient of the Helen Irvine/Friends Scholarship.
- P9) Phil Skilton writes about *Wollemia nobilis*.
- P10) Fruit of the female ginkgo tree, Annette Burnett.
- P11) Friends' committee and contacts.
- P12) Canterbury Horticultural Society, upcoming courses.

EDITOR'S NOTE

As always, there is a lot going on with the Friends and in the Gardens, human activity has not slowed down with the winter months!

Jeanette gives an overview of the past five years for which she has been the Friends' President — the list of achievements is a credit to Jeanette and the committee — a result of much hard work!

Wolfgang's report gives a snapshot of new developments in the gardens, where a lot is being done to make access easier for a wider range of users and thus to '*foster that link between the Gardens and our community*'.

We also hear from Breanna Hill the first appointed Gardens trainee for the new Helen Irvine/Friends scholarship that we are so delighted to be able to offer.

Meanwhile I do encourage all and sundry to make a trip down to the gardens even in these cooler winter months. The low winter sunlight brings a stark relief to the majestic structures of our mature deciduous trees and even now in the middle of winter there are buds and shoots showing signs of bursting into life and winter flowers on bare branches and pushing through the floor of the understory.

Here are a few photos that I 'snapped' at the Gardens in July's late afternoon sun.



4: *Camellia japonica* 'Coronation' flowering in the Kate Sheppard Memorial Walk.



5: *Edgeworthia chrysantha* starting to flower near the peace bell.



6: The sun's low rays reflecting off the water in the Peacock Fountain.

Annette Burnett.

FRIENDS' NEW WEBSITE

www.friendschchbotanicgardens.org.nz



Supporting the gardens

Creating and fostering an important link between Christchurch Botanic Gardens and our community, to promote, support and contribute to the ongoing development of the Gardens.

Join Now

We have completely reformatted and revised our website. We are aiming to make it easier to keep up to date, as more frequent changes are needed to keep up with our increased activities.

Thanks to Jane Cowan-Harris (Vice President) and Emma Velde of 21° Degrees, a Christchurch-based website and graphic design company, for their efforts in creating the new site.

The new site is built with 'WordPress' (an open-source content management system) and is still a work-in-progress. Several volunteers are learning

how to make changes and set up posts. We are planning to load all of the Friends past newsletters and still need to fix a few glitches!

Do email us at friendsofthegardens@gmail.com if you notice something that is not working as you'd expect, or if you have any ideas of information that you would like to see there.

Claire Mulcock

MONA VALE

The Friends have sponsored a new brochure about Mona Vale Gardens which come under the umbrella of our society. This has been an initial step by the Friends to strengthen our involvement with these beautiful gardens.

We are in the process of forming a group to develop this relationship and to identify a project (or two) to provide a focus for locals wishing to support the gardens. If you have an interest in being involved in working on a project to enhance Mona Vale please contact Jeanette Christensen

who is convening the group. Jeanette's phone number is: 021 263 7229.

We have also identified a continuing need for gardening volunteers at Mona Vale. Currently there is only one Friends' volunteer working there. If you are interested in helping Heidi and Ben in these beautiful surroundings then please get in touch with Jane Cowan-Harris.

Jane's email is: janechbythesea@gmail.com her phone No is 021 043 5342.

History of Mona Vale

Once ancient flood plain forest and a mahinga kai (food gathering area) for local Ngāi Tahu, this area was cultivated as part of the Deans' family farm, the first successful farm in Christchurch. Frederick Waymouth, Managing Director of the Belfast Freezing Works, and his wife Alice bought the land - building the homestead, lodge and gardens circa 1899.



Alice Waymouth in her garden. Photo courtesy of Ann Colbran.

Wealthy heiress Annie Quayle Townend bought the grand property in 1905 naming it Mona Vale after her mother's birthplace in Tasmania. She added the Gatehouse, extended the land and developed formal gardens. After her death in 1914, Mona Vale changed hands numerous times until purchased by the Gough family in 1939.

In 1962 Mona Vale was sold to the Church of the Latter Day Saints who planned to demolish the buildings. A passionate campaign saved Mona Vale and resulted in the Christchurch City Council purchasing and restoring it for use as a restaurant, function venue and public garden. While the property sustained damage during the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010-11, repairs were completed in 2019.

Opening hours

Gate times	
November to February	6.00am to 9.00pm
March	6.00am to 8.00pm
April	6.00am to 6.30pm
May to August	6.00am to 5.30pm
September	6.00am to 6.00pm
October	6.00am to 7.00pm
Homestead and Pantry	
Daylight Saving	Wednesday to Sunday, 9.00am to 3.00pm
Rest of year	Saturday and Sunday, 9.00am to 3.00pm

For bookings monavale.co.nz

Weddings and functions

To book the gardens for an outdoor wedding ceremony, call the Christchurch City Council 941 8999 or visit ccc.govt.nz/mona-vale-wedding-ceremonies

For information about catered functions and marquee weddings in the Homestead and Gardens, visit monavale.nz

Mona Vale Homestead, originally named Kawaia. Credit: Kirk Hargreaves



Mona Vale Gardens



Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens

Christchurch City Council

Visiting Mona Vale

Mona Vale Gardens is a picturesque park boasting botanic collections, mature trees, sloping lawns and impressive historic buildings. Enjoy this romantic setting against the backdrop of the Ōtākaro-Avon River - come for a relaxed stroll, bring a picnic or visit the cafe for a slice of cake and coffee.

Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens

The Friends of the Botanic Gardens are active supporters of Mona Vale Gardens. If you are interested in joining this group of gardening enthusiasts, drop in at the Kiosk in the Botanic Gardens to find out more, or visit the website.

friendschchbotanicgardens.org.nz



Friends' guided walks available in October - April and on request. Details on website or email friendsofthegardens@gmail.com

For further information about Mona Vale Gardens

941 8999

ccc.govt.nz/mona-vale

Garden collection history

The Arts and Crafts garden

The first garden, designed by Alice Waymouth, was in the Arts and Crafts style. Taking inspiration from nature and using local materials, key features included rock walls, soft winding paths and a flax garden.

The Edwardian garden

Under Annie Townend, the grounds were extended and developed into formal Edwardian gardens. As well adding the bathhouse, conservatory and fernery, the main driveway and a network of pathways were added.

A return to the natural

A keen horticulturalist, Tracy Gough favoured a more natural looking garden. Exotic trees and shrubs were added, the paths grassed over and an ornamental pool (now the lily pond) replaced the formal rose garden.

The public garden era

When the Council purchased Mona Vale, various gardening groups within the Canterbury Horticultural Society created display beds including the Rose Society, Fuchsia Circle, Heritage Rose Group, Dahlia Society, Iris Circle and Herb Society. Variations of these display gardens are still in place today.

Credit: Peter Carmichael Photography



Rose Garden

Formal rose gardens have been a feature at Mona Vale since the early 1900s. The current rose bed was designed in 1994 to coincide with the International RoseWorld Convention hosted in Christchurch. You will find both modern hybrids and heritage roses in this attractive garden.



Lily Pond

Originally installed as an ornamental pool, the gradual addition of aquatic plants transformed the pool into the lily pond you see today. The historic Falconer Fountain sits as centrepiece.



Bath house

Added in 1905 by Annie Townend, the Bath House has variously housed the Falconer Fountain, a heated swimming pool, subtropical plants and a souvenir shop. It is currently closed for repairs.



Fernery

Annie Townend purchased the Fernery from the 1906-07 International Exhibition held in nearby Hagley Park. Though little of the original fabric remains, it is a unique experience walking among the tree ferns dappled with light from above.

Rhododendron Border

Rhododendrons have been planted along the original carriage drive since the early 1900s. Between 1991 and 1998 the plant collection was enriched by the MacLeod family, generously donating a few hundred rhododendrons and camellias in memory of their son.

Iris Garden

Iris have been a garden feature of Mona Vale since the Iris Society developed a display garden in the 1970s. In late spring, the garden is a rainbow of colour thanks to a spectacular combination of iris species and cultivars.



Artworks



Falconer Fountain, Coalbrookdale Foundry, c.1875.
Kiltset garden decorations like the Falconer Fountain were popular in the late 1800s. The Peacock Fountain in the Botanic Gardens is from the same foundry.



The Sheilah Winn Gazebo, design by David Butcher and windows by Graham Stewart, 1997.
With stained glass windows inspired by Walter Crane's Flora's Feast, the gazebo was donated by philanthropist Sheilah Winn.



Eros, Trevor Askin, 1994.
This bronze sculpture was gifted to the people of Christchurch by the committee of the 1994 International Roseworld Convention that was held at nearby Hagley Park.



Mona Vale Homestead interior décor, Waymouth family, 1899.
Though the Homestead has been at a low ebb at many times, many Arts and Crafts motifs survive. Look for carved flowers, leaves and berries in hand-carved posts, tenon joints, hinged and the replica fireplace.



DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CHRISTCHURCH BOTANIC GARDENS IN RECENT MONTHS

Much has happened in the Gardens in recent months to improve access and to enhance areas.

The major accessway alongside the herbaceous border has been completed and looks very smooth and smart with paving along the edge of both the herbaceous border and the Archery Lawn. It is now in the same pattern as the walkway from the Armagh carpark footbridge to the Ilex Cafe.



7: Major accessway alongside the herbaceous border.

The riverside pathway in the Pinetum has been improved and we have added a short section to link the carpark to the path near Riccarton Avenue where a 'desire line' has shown the need for a path for many visitors that use it already. Also, a very short section of new pathway has been formed at the cherry and pine mound near the Peace Bell, which will allow better access for pushchairs and wheelchairs by avoiding the steps there, while also showing off the steps and tassa (what we call the two urns). Low planting will follow, and we are mulching the cherries to give them a better rooting environment and reduce the damage often done by the mower to these shallow rooted trees.

If entering the Gardens from the Armagh car park and bridge, please note the new sealed pathway between the car park and the river on the North Hagley Park side. This has been enhanced with the use of bollards and is a very attractive piece of landscaping and gives better access for a wider range of users for one of our primary access routes.

Work has started at the Magnetic Observatory with the interior fitout giving better observation and

explanation of treasures within, and the exterior is receiving much needed landscaping. Being the first project for the Botanic Gardens Trust, which has raised the majority of the funding, we will tell you more about it in due course.

At one end of the children's playground large logs from locally grown trees have been placed within a newly edged raised plot which has been filled with fresh wood chips, thus providing a worthwhile and safe extension to the playground.



8: A new extension to the children's playground.

Much work has also continued around the Rock Gardens/Heather Gardens. The team has developed a showpiece area which should be stunning with the spring show of alpines, and heathers etc in the coming months.



9: New work in the Rock and Heather Gardens.

HELEN IRVINE/FRIENDS OF THE BOTANIC GARDENS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



10: New plantings in the Rock and Heather Gardens.

An interesting development is a boardwalk under construction in the pond area between the Cockayne Garden and the NZ Icon Garden. Please give us a few more weeks to complete it then you will see that, although most of the paths have been there for a long time, becoming a board walk adds a new dimension to exploring and visiting the wetland areas of the Gardens.



11: New board walk under construction between the Cockayne and NZ Icon Gardens.

Have a wonderful winter and remember, if you want to come for a warming stroll outdoors, the Botanic Gardens is a great place to do so.

Ngā mihi

Wolfgang Bopp
Director of Christchurch Parks and Gardens



12: Breanna with her pet cockatiel Ziggy.

Hi, my name is Breanna Hill, I have been invited to write a little bit about myself after having been the recipient of the Helen Irvine Scholarship and having started work in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens as a trainee.

I have a lengthy retail background, having worked with Briscoes group from High School here in Christchurch and through part of my time at Lincoln University. Most recently ending just over four years with Terra Viva Home & Garden to join the team at Christchurch City Council.

Along with my new role in January came a couple of big life events: in the first few months I finally was able to attend my postponed graduation ceremony. Receiving a Bachelor of Science majoring in Conservation & Ecology with much excitement. With even more excitement I got engaged at Larnach Castle in Dunedin.

There is no 'typical' day here at the gardens. It is up to the weather, sometimes the urgency of a task or spontaneous delivery of mulch! We as a team work hard to keep up the public assumption that there are 100 gardeners that work in the Botanical Gardens. A great portion of the time is maintaining garden beds and the walkways. Pruning, clearing, weeding (people give me funny looks when I tell them I love weeding), are all top of the schedule for most of the curators. As an apprentice I have one

or two new work areas every 8 weeks, this includes Mona Vale where I am this June and July.

Recently at Mona Vale I have seen a historic earthquake damaged wall removed, the Lily Pond repaired and helped plant 6 *Sequoia sempervirens* that will outlive me. Being part of plantings, especially significant ones, are what truly reassures me that I am in the right field of work. I am inspired by the quieter great people that do things just because they are good for the environment, not because everyone is looking. I hope to be one of those people that is known for always talking about how great plants are and what would look great planted in that gap there.

My other interests include a love of photography and of design, both interior and exterior. I value catching up with friends on the weekends and I also have a cockatiel called Ziggy who is always happy to see me when I get home.

I feel honoured to receive the Friends of the Botanic Gardens scholarship, gifted by Helen Irvine. I have always had an interest in plants and am loving my new role here at the Botanic Gardens in the central city.

Thank you.

Breanna Hill



Articles

WOLLEMIA NOBILIS: A LIVING FOSSIL



13: One of the six Wollemi pines alongside the Ilex Cafe.

I have been interested in the Wollemi pine ever since it was discovered in 1994 by David Noble. He was systematically exploring an area in a remote canyon in the Wollemi National Park, a mere 150 kilometres from Sydney. He did not recognise the plant and it was thought to have died out maybe millions of years ago. It was growing in a remote series of narrow steep-sided, sandstone gorges.

Although called Wollemi pine it is not a member of the pine family (Pinaceae) but is related to *Agathis* and *Araucaria* in the family Araucariaceae. Its closest relatives are the kauri, Norfolk Island hoop, bunya, and monkey puzzle pines.

The discovery of the Wollemi pine in 1994 created great excitement in the botanical community due to its resemblance to conifer fossils like *Dillwynites* and *Agathus jurassica*. Wollemi pines are restricted to approximately 40 adult and 300

juvenile Wollemi pines growing in the Wollemi National Park of New South Wales. The rare nature of the Wollemi pine has seen it listed as endangered under the Australian Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act (1999).

The Wollemi pine can grow up to 40 metres in the wild with a trunk diameter reaching up to one metre. The bark of the tree is bubbly in appearance, chocolate brown in colour. It is monoecious, meaning that each plant has both male and female sexual reproductive cones. These cones appear at the end of branches, the female cones always growing above the male. The Wollemi pine has two types of branches, one that grows upright looking like a trunk arising in most cases from the base of the tree, and another that grows laterally and bears sessile leaves.

One amazing characteristic of the Wollemi pine is that every plant growing in the wild has the exact same DNA, making the species even more special. The propagation of the Wollemi pine is similar to other conifer species. Plants can be grown from seed or struck from tip cuttings.

Phil Skilton

References:

<http://www.wollemipine.com>
www.anbg.gov.au
www.conifers.org

GINKGO: FAIR FRUIT WITH A FOUL SMELL

I still remember the first time that I saw a ginkgo tree in full autumn colour, I was living in Rotorua and a friend pointed it out to me as we were driving towards Kuirau Park one autumnal afternoon. I was somewhat awestruck by the intensity of its bright yellow leaves. According to my friend it was not uncommon for a driver's attention to leave the road for the tree, resulting in the occasional crash. I do not know if that is true or not, but it was on a busy intersection and it was a beautiful tree.

It was only recently on reading Di Madgin's article describing some of Mona Vale's deciduous trees (Newsletter 117 Spring 2019 pages: 9- 10) that I learned there is both a male and female form of the ginkgo tree and that the female bears fruit which is a much-prized part of Asian cuisine.

Although not intending to try the fruit at that time, earlier this year my daughter and I decided to tackle the commemorative tree walk as outlined in the brochure produced by the Friends (available from the kiosk). We would visit The Gardens on a Sunday afternoon and track down about ten or so trees. It was mid-April when we reached tree number 33, a female *Ginkgo biloba*, located behind the kiosk. It had been in full fruit and much of the fruit had dropped to the ground.



14: Tree No 33 on the commemorative tree walk; a female *Ginkgo biloba* on a carpet of fallen fruit.

The smell of the fallen fruit was quite distinctive, some would say disgusting, but I remembered Di's article and picked up a handful of the fruit. I do not know that my daughter was too enthusiastic, but with a resigned look she tolerated my whim well enough.

Once home and with a little help from YouTube * I prepared and cooked the ginkgo nuts to arrive at an edible product. The steps were straight forward; after removing the outer soft flesh from the nut I gave them a good wash and allowed them to dry out for a few days. I then cooked the nuts in a little olive oil with some salt in a frying pan until they started to brown. After removing from the heat and allowing to cool I cracked and removed the outer skin revealing a bright green centre – the edible part.



15: Photos showing the process of the ginkgo fruit from harvest to table.

I thought that the taste was something like a mild broad bean, or perhaps similar to an edamame bean, not unpleasant — however a cautionary word seems appropriate and that is although they have been traditionally used in Asian cooking for centuries, they have always only been eaten in moderation as apparently the nut does contain a toxin which cooking does not destroy.

Bon appétit!

Annette Burnett

*emmymade: How to forage and cook ginkgo nuts. (YouTube)



Committee and Contacts

Committee

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