

# Newsletter

#### PRESIDENT'S REPORT AUTUMN 2022

Summer has been a busy month for everyone, and it has been heartening to see so many visitors to the Gardens. The seemingly endless autumn days we've been enjoying have allowed us all to enjoy a walk around, and during the school holidays, for so many children to be taking part in what the Gardens have to offer in the Hidden World trails that have been set up.

Despite that, and mainly due to Covid wariness, our numbers of visitors keen to go on our 1:30 p.m. free walks around the Gardens have dwindled. This hasn't been helped by the changeable weather. But now that more people are travelling around the country, there have been quite a few more visitors from elsewhere in NZ. We need to keep working on letting people know about our walks and hope to do so with better through engagement our website.

The Propagating teams have been very busy and continue to provide plentiful plants for the Plant Stall, with a regular income from this which is being used to fund courses for staff and for Gardens projects including the following:

- Funding for 3 staff to attend the Cass Field Station trip in January.
- Signage creation asking people not to feed bread to the ducks.
- A security camera set up in the Plant Stall by the the old Information Centre.
- Plants for the revamped hot garden at Mona Vale.
- A significant contribution towards the Māori design work on the paving around the recently reopened Magnetic Observatory.

We also held a more specific plant sale of succulents and larger native plants over two weekends. This proved quite successful, but any feedback



1: Visitors outside the Bathhouse at Mona Vale



Veronica lavaudiana Sun Hebe Endemic to Banks Peninsula Christchurch

would be welcome as we decide whether to hold a similar plant specific sale later in the year.

Our volunteers who work in the Gardens have come and gone, partly to do with Covid, once again. But we are seeing an increase in interest again and are always delighted to welcome new volunteers to help the staff in keeping the Gardens up to the standards we all like to enjoy, but which, for the huge areas each cover, is a daunting task on their own.

The Kiosk volunteers have also been experiencing a quieter time for the last few months, possibly as a hangover from the period when the Kiosk was not allowed to be entered by people other than CHS staff who work there and the Friends volunteers on Fridays and Sundays.

At Mona Vale, the small team of volunteers there have been working hard with the staff to re-establish a couple of the garden beds.

Jeanette Christensen has also been busy working on a submission to put to Council to bring forward the renovation work on the bath house there. This had been put back to 2028 in the latest Annual Plan but there have been so many queries from members of the public about it, and concern about the amount of degradation of the building, with increased renovation costs if repairs are delayed. We hope to have some success to report in our next newsletter.

A couple of events have been held since the start of the year. Firstly the Art of Beekeeping, which was a most entertaining talk given by members of the Canterbury Beekeeping Association; then, in March there was a visit to Margaret Long's garden, Frensham in Tai Tapu. This was a most successful event with 50 people attending, the weather behaving, and afternoon tea was enjoyed in the garden after the tour. Thank you to Chris Coster and Vicki Steven for organising these talks.

We were delighted to hear that people from the two Christchurch Botanic Gardens community have been honoured with a Fellowship of Roval New Zealand the Institute of Horticulture; Former Botanic Gardens director, John Clemens and Sue Molloy, librarian for the Gardens team were both awarded this in December last year. We would like to congratulate them both on this acknowledgement of their contribution to horticulture. This is the highest award you can be given.

Finally, many thanks to all of you who support us.

If you hear of anyone who is interested in becoming a Friend, please encourage them to do so either by joining online; or visiting us on a Friday or Sunday when a Kiosk volunteer will be able to help.

#### Jane Cowan-Harris

President of Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens

# **MONA VALE BATHHOUSE**



2: The Bath House at Mona Vale in need of strengthening and repairs

The bathhouse at Mona Vale was added by Annie Townend between 1905 and 1914. It was built to

resemble the conservatory at her father's Glenmark station. The bathhouse was visually linked to the fernery and now gone conservatory and glasshouse by the use of filigree ridge cresting. It differs from similar Victorian conservatories and glasshouses as it is built from finely crafted timber and glazing bars instead of steel.

A swimming pool was in the centre of the bathhouse with built-in pot planters surrounding it. Since the building has passed into public hands, it has mostly been used to house pot plants and a cast iron Falconer Fountain from the renowned Coalbrookdale Foundry.

Since the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010 -11 the Bath House has been closed to the public as it requires strengthening and repairs.



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# EDITORS NOTE

I had the unexpected opportunity last week to work in Tauranga and to stay with my Mum as she lives there. (hence I offer apologies for the late delivery of the autumn newsletter!) Whilst away I read through a copy of Paul Hawken's inspirational book 'Regeneration: Ending the climate crisis in one generation'

I was particularly heartened by a paragraph in which he described a group of amateurs in Germany tracking the local insect population over time. Their 'amateur' pastime it turned out was conducted in a robustly scientific manner and has contributed to the scientific body of understanding on the effects of human activity on our natural world. The point that Paul highlighted was that these were *amateurs* and the etymology of the word amateur stems from the latin word amare ---to love. He was saying that perhaps the greatest hope for 'saving the planet' was for people everywhere to 'fall in love' with our world and to be involved, somewhere, doing something, to make a difference. Isn't that what the 'Friends' are all about!

Once again, the newsletter content demonstrates passion for the natural world present in our community, spanning the generations from the more 'youthful' trainees through to more 'veteran' writers like Alan Jolliffe and Di Madgin, and recent Fellows of the RHINZ Sue Molloy and John Clemmens, who are building a legacy!



3: Botanic Gardens Early autumn, near the Rock Garden



4: Monarch enjoying the autumn sun, Mona Vale Car park



5: Autumn colour, photo by Robyn Kilty



# CASS FIELD TRIP



trainees from Three the Christchurch Botanic Gardens have attended the University of Canterbury's Cass Field Trip. The trip is 8 days long and is based at the university field station in Cass (near Arthur's Pass). It focuses on a handson approach to teaching in botany and some aspects of ecology, in the alpine and subalpine zones. Students study plant identification of New Zealand native alpine plants exotic and some plants (unfortunately mainly weeds). Other major components of the course teach about plant classification and herbarium pressing.

#### Hi. My name is Ari:

and I attended the Cass trip in January. Before I talk about my time in the mountains, I would like to thank the Friends for funding this outing. I wouldn't have been able to afford it without your help. For this you have my sincere thanks.

To start off, this was simply a phenomenal experience. The beautiful scenery alone was enough to have made it worthwhile, but there was a lot more to it. The amount of knowledge that I gained in the short week was exceptional, often at the end of the day my brain would feel overloaded with information (in a good way).

There were a lot of firsts for me on this trip. This was my first attempting time ever а university paper and I'm glad to have had the opportunity. My first-time pressing plant specimens. My first time really plant having go а at photography. And my first time spending a week with 30 or so plant nerds (those other

experiences are few and far between).



6: Leucogenes grandiceps

I hope that all the other apprentices, both future and present, get a chance to attend this course. He mihi nui.

#### Hello, I'm Matt:

The Cass field trip has been a highlight of my apprenticeship at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. We spent a week studying a small section of alpine flora which New Zealand offers. What was great about the course was that we were not only looking at plants but really looking at the small details! The way alpines should be viewed. This focus on detail really made the trip standout. The minor differences matter in botany, and to have a handson approach to seeing these for ourselves was something I will not forget and will be able to apply to any other group of plant. The course offered a formalised way to put together my learnings on alpine plants and botany that I had learnt from the incredibly knowledgeable curators at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. The university tutors added their own layer of specialist The teaching. quality of teaching provided by the tutors was amazing, and it was evident they absolutely loved guiding and helping us keen students.

Interestingly the trip also offered a chance to see garden potential of many of the smaller alpines and not so small ones. Many of you will be familiar with the likes of Lobelia (Pratia) angulata or some of our Celmisia species. But the Southern Alps offer many more treasures which clearly need showcasing in gardens or collections such as Lobelia linnaeoides and its beautiful dark green to purple foliage, Helichrysum selago with its unusual whipcord form or the succulent-like appearance of Lobelia roughii.

The weeklong experience was truly educational and inspiring for myself and has only added fuel to my passion for plants. I can only hope that future apprentices take the opportunity to complete the course.



Breanna: My year with the gardens rolled over with a trip to Cass Field Station. 10 days of botanising free of the dreaded COVID-world, it was bliss! The first day we were presented our projects, a plant collection, journal herbarium specimens and plant photography. I was also introduced to my new best friends, the Flora volumes. Plant keying was a large part of this course, along with plant family traits for ID'ing in the field.

I really got the most out of this UC course. I even enjoyed the tricky trek up a scree face to find hidden alpine gems like *Lignocarpa carnosula*.

My favourite project was the herbarium specimens (photos attached). There's something about the same methods followed by botanists 100 years ago that I love.



8: Coriaria arborea (tree tutu)



9*: Leptospermum scoparium* (manuka)

Ari Holder-Lunn Matt Beuzenberg Breanna Hill

Horticultural trainees, Christchurch Botanic Gardens

# **A LESSON IN TURF CULTURE**

My Level 3 horticulture certificate is in reach, I fell a little behind with the COVID chaos. I am underway with level 4 and completed my turf unit and I have never been prouder of a patch of grass before!

I was excited to see grass sprout within 5-7 days and checked in on it over the next few weeks, until it was time for the first mow. Precise watering, fertilising and ground preparation is key when sowing new lawn. I haven't torn my own front lawn up just yet but it's on the list!

- 1. The turf was planted on the alpine/rock garden side of the riverbank, opposite the rhododendron borders.
- 2. Trainee Alex Drennan and I were given this area to sow and take care of on our own with the help of Grant Matheson overseeing.
- 3. The ground had been completely dug up and a large new pipe outlet for the pond overflow into the river was put in. When the pipe and drain were finished the soil was levelled and turned over with a flat surface so we could broadcast seed on to it.
- 4. We used a fine sports turf seed, supplied by the turf team.
- 5. We applied water granules and DAP slowrelease granular fertiliser (Di ammonium phosphate) containing Nitrogen & Phosphorus for fertiliser.
- 6. Watering was done every day for the first 10 days, unless it rained, to keep the top of the soil layer moist.
- 7. The grass first sprouted after five days, by day ten it was a sea of green. After seventeen days Alex & I rolled the grass (with help from Grant due to my not so strong arms on a slope with a heavy roller) removing any air pockets and hardening the soil. The first mow was only eighteen days after sowing, which is reasonably quick. A final mow was done at 25 days; then the cones were packed away and it was handed over to the turf team and into their maintenance rotation.

Breanna Hill Horticultural Trainee



10: Soil leveled and rolled



Figure 11: Seed sown



12: Lush growth



13: First cut



Figure 14: Beautiful turf



#### <u>'FORGOTTEN' NATIVE</u> TREES OF CHRISTCHURCH



15: Alectryon excelsus. Corner of Colombo and Kilmore Streets

# <u>TITOKI</u>

#### <u>Alectryon excelsus subsp.</u> <u>excelsus</u>

With the recent discussion about tree canopy reduction in Christchurch and planting plans to increase that cover it is timely to consider a wider range of native trees of Christchurch and encourage their planting to increase biodiversity, provide authenticity to Christchurch and add interest to our urban and open space landscape.

Titoki is one of my favourite New Zealand native trees.

A well grown tree is attractive at all times of the year with its lovely pinnate leaves and its fantastic, coloured fruit.

Titoki will grow up to 6 metres or more depending upon conditions and while it grows in forest like conditions it also grows well on its own and more particularly as a specimen tree. Throughout spring, summer, and autumn it may continue to grow fresh new shiny, quite large pinnate foliage.

Its flowers are quite small and insignificant but the fruit that year follows later а is spectacular when ripe. Flowers and open fruit can appear at the same time. The large khakicoloured capsules split; revealing a very shiny black seed surrounded by a fiery red fleshy cup. True Canterbury colours!



16: Khaki cloured capsuls of titoki



17: Titoki fruit, a black seed in a red fleshy cup

While there are specimens of it in various places around Christchurch it is limited in its planting. There are several trees in the Botanic gardens native section, several in the University of Canterbury grounds and recently I found two lovely younger specimens growing on the Avon Riverbank on the corner of Colombo Street and Kilmore Street.

One of the finest forests of titoki locally is in the Kaituna Valley Reserve on the way to Akaroa.

Alectryon excelsus has as its southern limit Banks А Peninsula. search on iNaturalist (27 April 2022) shows there are a considerable number of records of titoki across Banks Peninsula and Christchurch which indicates it can grow well here. It will get some damage with frosts over about five degrees Celsius but as it grows larger it becomes more tolerant.

This is one of a number of trees that should be promoted for planting throughout the city.

#### Alan Jolliffe

#### References

Metcalf L. J (1987). *The cultivation of New Zealand Trees and Shrubs*. Reed Methuen.

Alectryonexcelsus.<u>https://inatu</u> ralist.nz/observations?taxon\_i <u>d=399464</u> accessed 27 April 2022

Pictures at the link below.

https://artandscienceofhorticult ure.weebly.com/alectryonexcelsus-subsp-excelsus.html

# **ALPINE TREASURES**

My love of alpines started with small bulbs, such a treat and treasure, early harbingers of spring growing in rows in my neighbour's garden. She had hired out her small front paddock to a grower, how I wanted some of those petticoat daffodils and white Muscari among others. Strictly speaking alpine pants occur above the tree line, where growing conditions are tough, growing seasons short and often extreme. It is certainly invigorating and inspiring visiting these areas.



18:*Haastia pulvinaris var. pulvinaris* (vegetable sheep) with seed dispersing and *Raoulia bryoides* on Mt Southey, Lake Tennyson

Natural inspiration while these actual species are terrifically demanding to grow, other species can be substituted. And over time, a humped and undulating plant is an exquisite art form in itself.

New Zealand's own alpine plants have relatively recently evolved as our mountain uplift was correspondingly recent. Evolving hand in hand with colour-blind bees, we have an array of yellows and whites in our alpine zone. I have visited the colourful alpine zone in Europe which are wonderful indeed, yet I love our muted. tone on tone alpine zone. So much so, I have attempted to recreate our unique feeling by planting plants with the alpine form and flowers that are only white or yellow. Many of our alpines are hard to grow. It's the hot summers in West Melton they really detest, but ironically cold damp weather can cause rot. Mitigation is simple for the easy-going alpines by being sure to have their leaves well above the soil, buffered by deep shinale. The shingle not only helps the plant, but looks effective if one chooses something that sits well in our environment and matches rocks chosen in a rock garden setting. Pale reflective sources of rock and shingle are the best, as it keeps the plant cool. I have grown Bulbinella angustifolia in this area, but resisted the urge of using daffodils, even the little ones as I feel they do not have the right aesthetic. However. when alpines troublesome, are riverbed plants are great like Raoulia or Muehlenbeckia ephedroides. Small Coprosma species are perfect and there are some diminutive manuka that are delightful. Smaller members of the Carmichaelia are also perfect and over time form architectural mats. Lower altitudinal plants can come to the rescue. Celmisias like C. mackaui and C. spectabilis are so much easier than the true alpines. There are hybrid Celmisias which we can buy which are much hardier and longer lived than their parent plants.

Other members of the NZ Alpine Garden Society have many other ways of growing their treasures. Many have rock gardens, as they are easy care (if set up correctly) and fit into tinv spaces giving an interesting, dynamic threedimensional look and a larger surface area than a flat patch could ever provide. One can create microenvironments for various plants, shady sides of rocks for those that like it cooler, or sunnier and hotter facing northern aspects. Rock overhangs can provide dryer sites if sunny, or wetter if south facing. Judicious use of microirrigation can provide wetter patches. In all a myriad of plants can be grown for yearround interest.

An extreme form of rock gardening is the crevice garden, here the spaces become limited and vertical, yet there are ample places to grow plants, and a much greater surface area than can be even formed by using rocks in the traditional way. Plants need to be demure and rampant self sowers need to be watched and dead headed. If weed free soil is used and clean sand introduced between crevices created the by vertically layered rocks, there is very little maintenance. Much less than in a rock garden. The rocks are best if flat, the Botanic Gardens Crevice Garden project was fortunate to secure Halswell stone, but this is expensive — if it is available at all - sites like Trademe have it. It is possible to use old concrete slabs and broken pavers which also makes good use of old hardfill. Slates or even old concrete roofing tiles can be used.

If one doesn't have the room or inclination for a crevice garden, it is both easy and hugely desirable to make miniature gardens in troughs or bowls. By using stacked and carefully curated rocks, or even old roofing slates or handmade hypertufa "stone" a deep root run can be provided and a highly aesthetic planting scheme with many plants can be achieved.

Lovely arrangements of "like minded" plants are best. *Saxifrages* like the shade. *Androsace* the sun, *Sempervivums* can tolerate abuse, for example little water. A trough of lime loving *Gentians* can be delightful. Use a trough to make an acidic woodland scene for example using plants such as; a tiny leaved miniature Rhododendron. Primula, Nertera depressa. Ramonda. or Haberblea, which can be hard to grow in an open garden. Use some miniature bulbs like crocus to add interest in earliest spring, ground orchids do well too. If your soil is limey, troughs allow us to grow acid lovers. the Lightweight troughs can be moved to a garden table, windowsill or veranda to admire form indoors. Similarly, if they are mostly dormant over winter or need a dry winter out of the frost like many of the loveliest Mediterranean bulbs, pop them behind the shed, (where the amount of rainfall, or lack thereof, is about right), out of sight until they are fit for public viewing again.



19: Crocus chrysanthus 'Cream Beauty'

We all love bulbs, and these can be incorporated in so many ways into our garden. In my opinion they are not used nearly enough to add layers in both time and space in our gardens. From herbaceous borders to mixed shrubs, to lawn wilder areas and woodland areas these fantastically well adapted plants with their storage organs of various types come up and go down with little input from the gardener. Yet they can reward us from earliest spring through to summer and then after a brief hiatus over the hottest months, after which other species are ready for an autumn display.

One of the favourite types of plantings in my garden are those in light woodland areas, one formal and the other meandering. Bulbs, massed over time by division and selfseeding, planted and then dragging themselves to their preferred depths, such that there is a succession of colour and charm. Galanthus (snowdrops), Leucojum (snowflakes) Eranthis, Crocus, Anemone. Scilla. Muscari. Erythronium, Cyclamen, Narcissus (daffodils), Fritillaria, Trillium, Tulipa, Allium, Camassia. Galtonia. Colchicum, (autumn crocus) and Cyclamen to name a few.



20: Colchium spp (autumn crocus)

Of course, if one looks at one genus, *Galanthus*, for example, there are a sequence of flowering times within this genus. Early ones hardly wait for any signs of warming spring, the doubles do not get pollinated and so their flowers just go on and on then there are autumn flowering species to search for. There are even autumn flowering daffodils. — Once you get hooked there is no cure!

There are seed collection, websites to buy seed from. They can be sprouted in plastic bags, or pots. There are bulblets to grow on, and a variety of other propagation methods which are simple, easy and effective.



21: A trough collection from master creator lan Young

The "trough collection" above is from master creator lan Young of the Scottish Rock Garden Club. His wonders can be found in his bulb log, a new issue released each week The front trough shows New Zealand plants much loved in Scotland.

He has given permission to use this, accredited of course to support both the SRGC and our society.

Suzanne Pickford NZ Alpine Garden Society

#### **AUTUMN COLOUR**

# *Rosa rugosa* 'frau dagmar hastrupp'



22: Rose hips on *Rosa rugosa* 'Frau Dagmar Hastupp'

Autumn is the season for Rosehips - often that part of the rose which we regard as secondary to the blooms - but Not in all cases, and is it? especially not in Old Roses. When we planted the Beverley Park Heritage Rose Garden, we purchased some varieties just for their showy display of hips. These included some Species roses, such as Rosa dupontii, Rosa moyesii and Rosa glauca, all of which are prominent in the Beverley Park garden, however the species pictured here is a *rugosa* rose, a species which is found growing in the wild in the northern hemisphere round the coast lines of Scotland and the Baltic Coast, so it is very tough to be able to withstand the freezing temperatures of these northern climes. And this is especially apparent in the distinctive foliage of the Rugosa rose — a foliage, which is dark green, thickly textured and crinkled and best of all in my experience completely disease free.

I would describe the Rugosa as a medium height rose but having said that, it can grow to tall hedge like proportions, especially Rosa 'alba'. The flowers are often single, but there are also double varieties, and they can be highly scented, but always prickly! Rugosa group is a The perpetual flowering variety and often the flowers and hips appear at the same time, the hips often more colourful and showier than the flowers as shown here in this variety; Rugosa 'Frau Dagmar Hastrupp'

#### Liriodendron tulipifera



Figure 23: *Liriodendron tulipifera* (the tulip tree)

Sometimes called 'the tulip tree', it will grow to a large parklike tree, but here is shown as a recently planted smaller tree. Rest assured, it will grow! eastern North Native to America, it is a deciduous tree, grown for its attractive symmetrical shape. its attractive lyre shaped leaves and its tulip or cup-shaped, fragrant yellowishlime coloured flowers. Even in its infancy as seen here, it has already formed its symmetrical shape which promises to grow to an impressive specimen tree.

**Robyn Kilty** 

#### **BEWITCHING CHERRY**



24: Blossom of Prunus yedoensis on the trees in the double avenue When we've survived the next four months, we'll be looking at the buds of *Prunus yedoensis* fattening up along the double cherry tree Avenue surrounding Hagley Park extending from its original planting at the Carlton Bridge along Harper Avenue. The gift of those trees, which must be a symbol of Christchurch the Garden City if ever there was one, came about through a nice juxtaposition of war and peace.

At the end of WW2, Nairns Nursery, former Botanic Gardens' curator Kevin Garnett's family nursery, received a huge order of these new trees from Japan. The local sentiment so soon after the war was such that nobody wanted to buy them. So the nursery gave the young trees to the City Council and they were planted in just the right place, encouraging new and extensive plantings of the same variety throughout the city as time has gone on. They are the first expression of spring in Christchurch and the bronzed sighs of autumn.

Di Madgin

Friends News

# CONGRATULATIONS: FELLOWS OF THE ROYAL NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF HORTICULTURE

A Fellowship is bestowed on members who have made a significant contribution to horticulture by their activities or interest in or service to horticulture.



25: Sue Molloy, viewing a painting of JF Armstrong

Sue Molloy is a long-standing Botanical Resources Coordinator at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. In this role she curates the Gardens, herbarium, and library records, and has a special interest in botanical and horticultural history of Canterbury.

Sue first worked in the Botanic Gardens in 1982 as a horticultural student and then again in 1984 as the Botanical Technician. From 1989 Sue spent four years abroad before returning to Christchurch and taking a role as the Botanical Resources Coordinator in 1993

In this capacity, she has personally been involved in databasing tens of thousands of hardcopy plant and herbarium records.

In 2017 Sue and John Clemens were successful in renaming the herbarium to the 'Lawrie Metcalf Herbarium', commemorating Lawrie Metcalf, a renowned horticulturist and former curator of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens.



26: Dr John Clemens

Dr John Clemens is a landscape ecologist, plant biologist and horticulturist, He was appointed Curator of Christchurch Botanic Gardens in 2009. With the support of the Friends of the Christchurch Gardens, international Botanic and local collaborators, especially those at the School of Biological Sciences, University of Canterbury, he revitalised botanical research in the Gardens, supervising and publishing papers on a wide range of subjects, including; bee pollinator behaviour, endangered trees in Canterbury arboreta, Gastrodia orchids, flowering mechanisms in native plant species, tree water use, earthquake effects on plants, and plant biosecurity. He has given many public talks on the history and potential of the Botanic Gardens and worked with others to guide their future development up until 2018.

#### DON BELL COMMEMORATIVE SEAT



27: Friends volunteers enjoying the new macrocarpa bench seat gifted by the Bell family

On 9th November 2021 Mrs Nuella Bell and her son Tim kindly donated to the Friends



Contact Numbers

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of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Propagating group a macrocarpa bench seat. It was a lovely spontaneous dedication celebration involving the members of the Friends' committee, guides and propagators.

Don gave many dedicated hours of work on various committees and branches of the Friends of Christchurch Botanic Gardens. He was "CEO" of the propagating group for many years and a knowledgeable regular. and very guide. I feel it was very appropriate that a locally built macrocarpa bench seat should be chosen to commemorate Don's life. After that strong unpretentious resilient Monterey Cypress tree died the timber has provided a valuable contribution in enabling our dedicated propagators to rest their weary legs and quietly remember our fine gentle man, Don. We all miss him.

Many thanks Nuella and family