

FRIENDS OF THE CHRISTCHURCH BOTANIC GARDENS INC
NO. 3 **SPRING 1990**

Editorial

The first few months of activity of the Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens has shown an enthusiastic interest in the programme that has been organised, and this has been accompanied by a rapidly growing membership. Even the depth of winter and the superstition that surrounds Friday the 13th did not deter a large number of the Friends from turning up to hear John Palmer talk on Mystical Plants. That occasion was accompanied by the mysterious disappearance of lights temporarily set up to light the approaches to the Information Centre and this has reinforced the need to have secure lighting in this area if the Centre is to be used safely at night.

Roy Edwards, organiser of the Plant Propagation Demonstration and Workshop, had a Lincoln University commitment to attend to on 25 August so he was not able to be present to see the success of this event. Frank Harvey, Pamela Gibbons, Andrew Hodge and Richard Doyle were generous in giving their time and knowledge to the four groups who did the circuit from the Information Centre to the glasshouses and potting shed.

What has become quickly apparent is that the formation of the Friends has given those who have joined the Society access to an enormous range of knowledge about plants, horticulture and gardening. This and future Newsletters will introduce readers to some of the personalities associated with the Gardens and the Society.

Activities

The committee has planned three meetings for the members to be held in October, November and January. Full details of these are given on a separate sheet.

'Fun and Games with Plant Names'. Friday 26 October, 7 pm, Canterbury Horticultural Society hall. Bring a pencil and paper. Cover charge for hall hire \$1.00

'Alfred Buxton, Colonial Gardener'. Saturday 24 November 10 am, Mona Vale.

'Bedding Plant Trials'. Saturday 26 January 1991 5 pm. Meet at trial plots near Information Centre and bring a picnic tea if you wish.

1990 Horticultural Lectures and Demonstrations

There are two more events in this series this year. They commence at 10am in the Information Centre.

Saturday October 6: Old Fashioned Roses.- Richard Doyle.
 Saturday November 3: Herbs for the Home Garden.- Virginia McNaughton.

If Friends identify themselves as members of the Society they can attend these events at \$2.00 per person. It was also agreed at the last Committee meeting that when the Gardens have plant sales Friends can make early selection of the plants they wish to purchase providing this can be

conveniently arranged by the sales organiser. As plants in these sales are good value, no special price concession will be available to Friends.

Introducing Virginia McNaughton

Virginia is the Botanical Officer at the Gardens. This position arose from the restructuring of the Parks Unit when Virginia's previous job as Technical Assistant was divided into two parts; the Education Officer, now held by Richard Doyle, and the Botanical Officer. Virginia and Richard are required to coordinate their work particularly where this involves the Garden's displays and computer based records.

Virginia's responsibilities are to keep the records of the Gardens plants, liaise with the worldwide network of Botanic Gardens, collect seed and produce the Index Seminum, label plants, and maintain the library and herbarium. Her duties extend to Mona Vale and other City parks and she is also involved in research in conjunction with the Tertiary Institutes.

Born within the Sound of Bow Bells

Most of those who attentively watched Frank Harvey's demonstrations of budding and grafting on 25 August probably did not appreciate that this was but one of his many interests and skills. Frank came to New Zealand as a boy and went to Sumner School. He did Fine Arts at the Canterbury College School of Arts. Before the War it was a requirement to take another subject with Fine Arts, and Frank's choice, horticulture, was an annoying one to Director Richard Wallwork.

Frank won a scholarship that took him into the Ordnance Corp at Burnham Military Camp. He continued his horticultural studies until he joined the 2nd NZEF in 1941. He served as a tank commander in the Middle East and all of the Italian campaign. This gave him good reason to speak Italian and to make himself understood in Arabic. He was in the leading tank in the fall of Trieste.

After the war Frank transferred out of the army to the Ministry of Works as a colour consultant and later was ceded to the Farmers Co-op as an interior decorator. During this time he operated a wholesale nursery.

In 1962 Frank began work with Duncan and Davies Nursery in New Plymouth. After briefly spending time in all the D and D departments he served as an artist, photographer, public relations officer, and wrote for their catalogues. This work took him on travel throughout New Zealand introducing and looking for new plants- mutants-sports-hybrids, and giving lectures. He became D and D's senior sales rep. After leaving D and D's he advised on the development and improvement of several garden centres.

Frank says he does not have a garden, rather he has a collection of plants. This includes 200 bonzai. He continues to look for new and interesting plants for horticulture. Frank is a dedicated family man and is a past Master of the Masonic Lodge. Many of the Friends will know Frank as an author of articles on ornamental horticulture and as a columnist in a local paper.

Orchids at Townend

DSIR's Dr Brian Molloy, a leading authority on the taxonomy of New Zealand orchids, found enthusiastic interest in our orchid flora by the large number of people who attended the International Orchid Society Conference in Auckland in September. Brian who attended to deliver a paper on the New Zealand orchids and the problems they present said there was a truly fantastic display of orchids at the conference. While most of us in Christchurch missed out in this display Wayne Dering reports that now is a good time to see the orchids in the Townend House, especially the *Cymbidiums*. Wayne describes the *Cymbidiums* as being one of the most popular groups of orchids, not only because they have beautiful flowers but also because they tolerate cool conditions.

Cymbidiums bloom from June to November making them ideal display plants for colour in winter and spring and a very useful cut flower for florists. They have arching sprays, and a large well grown plant may have as many as 20 of these each bearing 15 to 25 flowers. Each flower is beautifully poised and exquisitely marked and coloured, originally to be functionally attractive to pollinators and certainly aesthetically attractive to people. The blooms are complemented by narrow, green, strapped shaped-leaves and large pseudo-bulbs.

There are more than 40 species of *Cymbidium* native to Asia and Australia many occurring at high altitudes. From these species hundreds of cultivars have been produced which have larger flowers and a wider colour range than the species and many are very fragrant.

Some *Cymbidium* cultivars presently on display in the Townend House are: Coldstream 'Inferno', Valley Gem 'Mayfair', May Hopcroft 'Orange Crush', 'Greensleaves', Cracker Jack 'Rembrandt' and Beacon Fire 'Cecil Park'.

Glasshouse for the Friends

Gardens curator Warwick Scadden has arranged for a 4.5 x 8m glasshouse to be erected in the propagating area of the Gardens which will be available to Friends to grow plants. These plants could be grown for research purposes, as additions to the Gardens collection, to raise revenue for the Society or for the interest of individual members. The Friends Committee is seeking urgently a person or persons who would be interested in looking after this glasshouse. This would be a very interesting and rewarding activity helpful to the objectives of the Friends. Committee members are keen to hear from any person interested in this role.

Gardens History and Archives

There is also an opportunity for members of the Friends who enjoy delving into the past to have access to the archives of the Garden for historical research and writing. As with the glasshouse, the Committee would welcome hearing from anyone interested in taking this activity on.

Garden Walks

Informal and companionable walks in the Gardens will be arranged on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, starting at 1pm at the Information Centre. These will be arranged by Adrienne Moore, and it would help if Friends wishing to go on these walks telephone her (3 515 915) to say they are coming.

The Committee is also looking for people who would be willing to conduct walks in the Gardens for Friends in the weekend.

Richard Doyle will be contacting people who have indicated they are interested in assisting Garden's staff in taking visitors on tours of the Gardens.

Logo Competition

The Friends are looking for a logo and are running a competition for a suitable symbol or image for this purpose. It has to identify with the Gardens and be able to be reduced for use on letterhead.

Pupils and students of local schools have been invited to take part in the competition, and it is open to the Friends and any member of the public who wish to enter.

First prize is a \$50 book prize and two \$10 vouchers will be given as consolation prizes. The Committee Members will judge the competition to select a suitable logo for the Society. Their decision will be final and no correspondence on the result will be entered in to.

The closing date for entries is Friday 9 November and these should be posted to 'The Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, P.O. Box 237, Christchurch.'