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NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF THE CHRISTCHURCH BOTANIC GARDENS INC.
NO. 16 P.O. BOX 237 CHRISTCHURCH SUMMER 1993

Editorial comment

Another year is coming rapidly to an end. The weather is still patchy, but hopefully will settle soon. As 1993 ends this is an opportunity to wish all 'Friends' well in the coming year. This year has again been a busy one for many of the Friends and much has been achieved. A special thank you to all those who have contributed in whatever way. Next year's programme has largely been finalized and again offers much to members. This is your organization and I hope you take advantage of what is on offer. We have again excellent speakers and guided walks planned - support the Friends in 1994 by coming along and joining in. For now, I wish you all a pleasant Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Fund raising news

Raffle prize winners from the Fete raffles;
Herb Bowls - R. May & R. Proctor.
Basket Indoor Plants - N. Mason
Large Indoor Plant - N. O'Brien
Books currently being raffled at \$1. per ticket are: The Green Tapestry by Beth Chatto, The Flower Garden by Penelope Hobhouse, The cultivation of NZ trees and shrubs by Lawrie Metcalf and NZ native shrubs and climbers by C Smith-Dodsworth. Tickets are limited to 100 per book and prizes are drawn as each 100 tickets in a raffle are sold. Tickets can be purchased at the Information Centre or at Meetings of the Friends. Continued Members' support for the raffles is one way in which subscriptions can be kept low. Raffle takings to the 8 Nov. since the last newsletter were \$301.

Fete takings

Sales from the Friends' stall at the Fete raised \$264.35. Special thanks to those who donated plants or books.

Christmas stocking fillers

Envelope recycling or gift stickers.

Packets of fifty are on sale for \$3.50. These are ideal both to promote the Christchurch Botanic Gardens and to help recycle at the same time.

Bookmarks. These are both attractive and useful showing the Four Seasons of the Botanic Gardens and are only 50 cents. Profit from the book mark sales goes toward the Botanic Gardens Library grant.

Recent Purchase

A Paximat slide projector and stand have been donated by the Friends for use in the Information Centre.

New members

A warm welcome to the following new members who have joined since the last newsletter was published. Ngaire Bacon, Jacky Bowring, Jayne & Peter Burgess, Dian Chapman, Robyn & Christopher Evans, Dallas Harvard, Pat James, Aisla Morrow, Helen Roland, Edna Wilson, Wendy Frahme and Tania Long Gary Fleming

RECENT MEETINGS

On September 15th, Mr Lawrie Metcalf presented the Barnett Memorial Lecture to the Canterbury Horticultural Society on The role of the home garden in the protection of rare and endangered native plants.

Mr Metcalf was curator of the Botanic Gardens in Christchurch from 1955 until 1977 when he became the Director of Parks in Invercargill. This was attended by about 100 people from a range of groups and societies. In the address Lawrie covered the need for conserving New Zealand plants and showed a number of garden situations where rare and endangered plants were being successfully grown.

On Saturday 18th September in the afternoon Dieter Steinegg, the arborist for

the Christchurch Botanic Gardens presented an interesting account of the Medicinal use of trees to a receptive group of Friends in the Information Centre. Copies of notes on the medicinal uses of trees supplied by Dieter are available from the Information Centre for just 50 cents.

2nd & 3rd October *Spring Fete*

This involved about seventy members of the Friends with Botanic Gardens staff over the two day period. It also required considerable preparation before hand preparing plants for sale. A special note of thanks to Faye Fleming for organizing and rostering the Friends, also to Max Visch and the potting up team, to all the guides who took guided tours, to Roy Edwards and Richard Doyle who prepared and ran lectures and everybody who had any part in the event - well done! Approximately \$7000 was raised.

An appreciative note - re the Fete

The staff of the Gardens would like to take this opportunity to thank all Friends who helped make the Fete held on the 2nd and 3rd of October a success.

We were very fortunate with the weather being so fine over the weekend. This was a contributing factor to the great turnout of people who enjoyed the excellent atmosphere. Thank you once again for supporting the first Fete to be held in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens for 63 years !

On Saturday 16th October there was a *Garden visit to Mr & Mrs Nicholls.*

Approximately thirty members enjoyed the Nicholls wonderful riverside garden and the chance to hear tips and chat about their plants and trees. Our group is one of many to visit this inspiring garden. (Funds raised for the Friends from this visit were \$93).

On Wednesday 20th October at 7.30pm. Dr. David Given (the Vice President of the Friends) presented an illustrated talk on *Photography in the Botanic Gardens.* This was a real treat with superb slides and useful information on how to improve our own photo opportunities of things botanical.

On Wednesday 17th November at 7.30pm. Dr. Warwick Harris (The Inaugural President of the Friends) and Scientist with Mannaki Whenua Landcare Research N.Z. covered aspects of his research involving *New Zealand Native plants.* Warwick covered a fascinating range of topics from his work with manuka and cabbage trees to the possible reasons for the spread of *Hieracium* in the MacKenzie country. The perspective of the scientific approach provided us all with a better understanding of the work of Research scientists.

Coming Events - mark your calendar now

27th November Saturday 1.30pm Mr Frank Harvey *19th Infantry Battalion Memorial at Victoria Park* walk. Frank was on the original committee of the Friends and has wide experience in horticulture. Those intending going on this walk should meet at the Memorial in Victoria Park at 1.30pm.

3rd December Friday 4.30 - 6pm.

Xmas Social - Friends & Botanic Gardens Staff Cost \$6 includes one drink plus finger food. Additional wine or beer cost \$1.50 per glass, with soft drinks \$1. Last year we had approximately seventy members at our Christmas function and we look forward to another good attendance. Please accept this as a personal invitation, as it is very time consuming to attempt to ring everyone. For catering purposes we need RSVP immediately. Please phone Adrienne 3515 915 or Patricia 3669 645 by Tuesday November the 30th at the latest.

1994 PROGRAMME

February Floral Festival 16 to 28th

Once again the Friends will offer Guided Walks in the evenings in the Botanic Gardens. The walks will depart at 7.00pm from the Information Centre on Thursday 17th, Tuesday 22nd and Thursday 24th Feb. The walks will be for about one hour, there is no charge, but donations will be welcome.

Wednesday, March 16th at 7.30pm at the Information Centre. Mr John Thacker will talk on Plants - poisonous, noxious or simply maligned. John is a noxious plants inspector with the Canterbury Regional Council and is a member of the Friends.

Wednesday, April 20th at 7.30pm at the Information Centre. Landscape Architects from the ChCh. City Council will frame their views on the Christchurch Botanic Gardens 100 years from now.

Wednesday, May 18th at 7.30pm. at the Information Centre. Mr Robert Crowder, Senior Lecturer from Lincoln University will present some thought provoking ideas on Organic husbandry and the Botanic Gardens.

Sunday, June 19th at 3.00pm at the Information Centre. Midwinter Social Surprise ? Who knows there may be a few more details closer to the time??

Sunday, 31 July at 2pm in the Information Centre. AGM, followed by afternoon tea and an informal discussion on the future directions for the Friends of the Botanic Gardens.

Wednesday, 17th August at 7.30pm at the Information Centre. A questionable, sweet evening. A quiz, coffee and cakes evening. Details closer to the time.

Wednesday, 21st September at 7.30pm in the Information Centre. A well known member of the Friends - Mr Des Riach will present Spring bulbs - a mixed bunch.

OCTOBER - SPRING FESTIVAL

Wednesday, 16th November at 7.15pm (earlier time) at the Information Centre. Virginia McNaughton will talk about Culinary Herbs - a gourmets delight. Herbs may be available for purchase at this meeting.

Friday, December 2nd. at 4.30pm Christmas Social for Friends and staff of the Botanic Gardens.

DAYTIME WALKS 1994

(Enquiries to Max Visch 3382 273)

Saturday, 19th March at 1.30pm. Meet at the Ilam Homestead, Main entrance on Ilam Road opposite the Student Union Building.

Other plans for walks and outings in 1994 include a trip to Orton Bradley Park and a day trip to Ashburton Domain and other local gardens. More details later.

"Strawberry Trees"

a contribution from Max Visch.

The strawberry trees of our parks and gardens belong to the genus *Arbutus* - an old latin name for the strawberry trees of Europe. Strawberry trees are the giants of the large heath family [Ericaceae] which also contains such common garden shrubs as *Erica*, *Calluna*, *Daboecia*, *Gaultheria*, *Pieris*, *Kalmia*, *Enkianthus* and *Rhododendron*. Only in *Rhododendron* do some species attain the size of trees. *Arbutus* consists of some twenty species of evergreen trees and large shrubs. Only two of these are native to parts of Europe - the great bulk of species being concentrated in central and w. North America.

The species most often cultivated in Christchurch gardens is *Arbutus unedo* - a native of the scrublands and forests of Asia Minor, Mediterranean countries, s.w. France and southern Ireland. It forms a small, rounded tree with spreading branches and although it can grow to a height of ten metres - it is more often seen as a large shrub since typically the stems branch from a short central trunk near the ground. The red-brown bark does not peel as it does in some other *Arbutus* species, but becomes rough and scaly and changes to a greyish-brown on aging. The pretty urn shaped flowers in white, pink or yellow are similar to those of *Pieris japonica* (lily of the valley shrub) and can be seen hanging in clusters

from the ends of the shoots from February to August. The most striking feature of this tree is the abundance of green, yellow and orange - red strawberry like fruits which form a pleasing contrast with the dark green, leathery foliage. As the fruits take one to two years to ripen, they are a permanent feature of a healthy mature tree. The pulpy fruits while edible and attractive in appearance are no great delicacy. The Roman naturalist Pliny wrote " The fruit is held in no esteem - the reason for it's name *unedo* - being that a person will eat only one." Yet birds love them and the few I have eaten myself from trees growing along the Dyers Pass Road

were quite tasty. In some Mediterranean countries a delicious liqueur is prepared from the berries. At one time the timber was much used in Ireland to make charcoal for the smelting of silver, copper and lead ores. This practice caused the disappearance of this tree over large areas of Ireland. It is still plentiful around the lakes of Killarney where their crooked gnarled trunks grow among holly and ivy on rock slopes and cliffs.

The Greek or Cyprus strawberry tree *Arbutus andrachne* a native of Cyprus, eastern Mediterranean and Asia Minor is rather similar to *Arbutus unedo*, but differs in it's smaller fruit and peeling bark which leaves a smooth and cinnamon red trunk. Where the ranges of *Arbutus unedo* and *A. andrachne* overlap, the natural hybrid *A. x andrachnoides* is found with many characteristics intermediate between those of the parent species. It was first found in Greece and shows hybrid vigour. Its most distinctive feature is the beautiful red bark which peels off in long vertical strips. The third species of interest to New Zealand gardens is the madrona - *Arbutus menziesii* - a tree which under suitable conditions may reach a height of thirty metres and thus may well be the tallest member of the heath family. The madrona is native to a relatively narrow belt along the Pacific Coast from British Columbia to southern California and is the only broadleaf evergreen tree native to Canada.

The name madrona - which is the Spanish name for strawberry tree was given to this

tree by a Spanish priest, Father Juan Crepsi, who on seeing these trees in California in 1769 was strongly reminded of the strawberry trees of his own country.

The aging, much admired specimen near the Woodland bridge in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens shows that the madrona of California is a much larger tree than the European species and differs from these also in other respects. The upright panicles of flowers appear in spring, not autumn, the orange red fruits are among the smallest in the genus and the leathery, ovate leaves - dark glossy green above are a pale blue green beneath. On the old trunk, the bark is cracked into small squares and from the branches, it peels away in paper thin curly flakes and strips exposing the smooth yellowish green, pink or red inner bark. The madrona is not particular as to soil type, but on very poor sites is reduced to a shrub or small tree with a crooked, often leaning trunk and twisted branches. It commonly grows as such on exposed rocky bluffs along the Pacific Coast in British Columbia. The species is a prolific producer of viable seed and is often the first tree to occupy newly cleared land and sometimes forms almost pure stands. Yet it is in the fog belt of northern California and Oregon where the madrona occurs as an understory tree in the douglas fir and redwood forests that the species attains its greatest dimensions. For a hardwood the madrona is a long lived tree - the largest specimens are estimated to be at least 200 to 250 years old. The Indians in California greatly venerated these ancient trees of which the largest measured had a girth of over 24 feet at 16 inches from the ground (7.38m girth at 0.4m from ground). Professor Tepson in his *Silva of California* (1910) stated how "Under its spreading limbs the coast tribes met the interior tribes in the former days for the discussion of intertribal matters and for the conclusion of treaties. For comparison I recently measured the Botanic Gardens madrona and found its girth at a similar distance from the ground to be 6.57m (21 feet, 7 inches) - which compares very favourably with the much older trees in California. Unfortunately in spite of extensive tree surgery and heavy bracing and

cabing of its branches - the tree is showing signs of advancing years. It is rather thin in foliage with many dead or dying branches, yet it is producing a heavy crop of flowers this spring. It is to be hoped that this well known and striking tree will be with us for some years to come.

The timber of the madrona is closely grained, heavy, hard and dense - suitable for furniture, small cabinet work and wood turning. The berries were an important food to the Indians both cooked and raw. They also prepared a tea from the roots and leaves to treat stomach troubles.

Friends' Glasshouse

HELP NEEDED !

We have been given a glasshouse for Friends to use in the Botanic Gardens. It has been used for potting up work for various sales. However if we have a member or members willing to supervise the glasshouse much more could be made of this valuable asset. We envisage a 'Growing Group' who would propagate and grow plants for Friends fund raising purposes. If interested please phone Max Visch 3382 273 or Adrienne Moore 3515 915.

Information Centre helpers.

Jane English and Bob Peers make up the Information Centre roster and facilitate the smooth running of this part of the Friends' operation. Information Centre helpers - nearly sixty Friends - are rostered for duties in the Information Centre on Friday s and Saturday s. Last year a training session for Information Centre helpers was held, led by the NZ Institute of Management on all aspects of dealing with the public. Another training session is being planned for next year. Richard Doyle - Education Officer for the Botanic Gardens is offering guided walks, especially for those who help in the Information Centre to know what is of special interest in the gardens each season and he is preparing a monthly leaflet of special

features. The first walk will be on Tuesday November 30th from the Information Centre at 9.00am for one hour. Other Friends are welcome to come along.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Dr David Given - Vice President of the Friends for being awarded the AHRIH the Associate of Honour from the Royal NZ Institute of Horticulture - for his work with rare and endangered plants.

The Dunedin Visit

a contribution from Deryck Morse.

Eighteen members travelled south by private cars on 17th October to participate in Dunedin's Rhododendron Week. 27 public and private gardens were listed as open for visits. We visited 12 of them. We also called at the Oamaru gardens for lunch on our way south and at 'Centrewood', 7km out from Waimate, for lunch on our way home on the 20th. Except for the fact that our leader Robert Peers, broke a foot bone on the 19th, it was a refreshing and enjoyable activity.

I think the Rhododendron dell in the Dunedin Botanic Gardens would be the highlight of our visit. There are easy paths through gullies and hillsides varying in steepness. Different rhodo series are grouped and interspersed with maples, conifers and fuchsias. Crinodendrons, hostas and a boardwalk add to the interest. Their perennial border I thought was a weak point, but their rock and herb gardens more than made up for that. The gardens date from 1863 and being largely on a hill, they are in sharp contrast with our own. We could have done with more time there preferably with a few of their Friends.

On the 18th we visited three gardens on the Peninsula and 2 private gardens at Andersons Bay. The latter had a high standard of maintenance and both had features which reflect the owners individual interests. Glenfalloch, Lanarch's Castle and Cor Fluit's are larger with many trees. Alpines and rhododendrons were a common denominator. It was of interest to experience

cool mists suddenly appearing from nowhere. The weather forecaster on the 18th declared the place to be on the 19th was Outram. We were indeed lucky to be there. First to 'Traquair' 11km inland from Outram. This place has been developed over 25 years to complement a modern farm homestead. It has the character of an arboretum. Next we saw a large farm garden with a modern home and a sweeping lawn sheltered by beautiful old hawthorn hedges. A quality horse drawn carriage collection drew great interest too. Two further private gardens at Halfway Bush and Belleknowes again displayed their owners creative skills and gave those of us who were unfamiliar with suburban Dunedin an appreciation of the city's charms. At 'Tannock Glen', being developed by the Dunedin Rhododendron Group Max confessed that he had not previously seen *Disanthus cercidifolium*.

Our visit to 'Centrewood' in warm NW sunshine was a bonus arranged by Adrienne the day before. Her efforts and Bob's leadership provided a successful trip and on behalf of those who took part I offer our thanks. To Max too for his patience with our frequent questions. Eric Dunlop of the Dunedin Friends was also a great help in planning our visits.

Those who went to Dunedin were G. & B. Halliburton, R. & P. Peers, A. & C. Moore, L. & S. Sinclair, J. Moss, N. Brittenden, N. Lofts, J. English, P. Rabe, M. Anderson, M. Teague, D. McLachlan and M. Visch.

Photo

Members of the Dunedin Party, Max Visch left talking to Cor Fluit at his property Pukemara.



Contact numbers

	home	work
<u>President</u>		
Roy Edwards	3385 969	3252 811
<u>Vice President</u>		
David Given	3516 069	3252 811
<u>Secretary</u>		
Adrienne Moore	3515 915	
<u>Treasurer</u>		
Colin Neal	3518 676	3794 100
<u>Walks</u>		
Max Visch	3382 273	
<u>Info. Centre Helpers Roster</u>		
Jane English	3555 289	

Nb. Please use the Armagh Street entrance to the car park for evening meetings at the Botanic Gardens Information Centre. Gates will be open for Friends' evening functions.

Subscriptions

Subs are now overdue, but may still be paid. They are at the same level as they were three years ago. Adrienne asks that when you fill out your membership renewal for the 93/94 year, please also fill out the reverse of the form. Even if you have previously offered help, we need this information to keep our lists up to date.

STOP PRESS EXCITING NEWS

Ursla and William McHardy, members of the Friends from Frankfurt Germany, will be in New Zealand Dec/Feb 1994. We have arranged for Ursla to show slides and talk about the Flora and Fauna of the Falklands, on *Wednesday 16 February 1994, at 7.30pm in the Information Centre*. Ursla is well known for her work at the Palmengarten in Frankfurt where she played a leading role in the design and construction of an enormous rock garden. She continues in her role as consultant, with her main interest being rock and alpine plants. The McHardys were last here in 1991. *Please put this date in your diary now, and make this meeting made known amongst your friends. This will be our first 1994 meeting.*