

# Newsletter

For Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Inc.

No 34, Autumn 1998

## INSIDE

1 President's Comment

1 Jottings from the Curator

2 Coming Events

3 Recent Events

4 Bits and Pieces

5 Feature Article

## President's Comment

Dear Friends

The floral festival is over and what a wonderful celebration of flowers, colour and design. One part of the Festival was the guided walks in the Botanic Gardens. Each year the numbers and the donations grow. I really enjoy seeing tourists and locals gathering to increase their knowledge and enjoy the beauty of what Peter Mahan calls the 'lungs of the city'.

The first part of the Database is almost complete and it is a very exciting and exacting project. It will be of huge benefit to all garden staff and to the public wanting correct up-to-date information.

An enthusiastic (if sometimes stretched) group of Friends provide the weekend guides for the toastrack. These Friends, plus others interested in guiding, had a very informative and helpful two hour training session.

March is the start of the evening sessions for the 1998 programme. We need members attending all events to continue the friendship, learning and challenges of the organisation. Please note in your diaries all the important dates and remind other members that you meet.

Because of the unusually hot dry summer, the Potting Shed Team will be starting later than usual. If you haven't put your name forward and would like to assist, please phone 351-7798.

Have you noticed the stylish new gate on the bridge to the Information Centre.

Happy gardening!

*Faye Fleming*

## Jottings from the Curator

To say that this past summer has been exceptional is an understatement. As in all gardens, it has been difficult within the Botanic Gardens to maintain an adequate supply of water to plants, while at the same time being responsible in the conservation of water.

By watering principally during the night, early morning and evening, we have been able to minimise the stress to plants.

### **Conservatories**

One of the issues which was identified in the public survey which many 'Friends' assisted with, was the request by many visitors to have the conservatories open for longer hours. From 1 November 1997 until 31 March 1998 the hours of opening have been extended from 8:30am to 5:00pm daily. While visitor numbers have been high, during the extra hours which have been made available, it is considered worthwhile to

have provided an opportunity for people who otherwise would only have the grounds to view.

The water feature in the central ground section of Cuninghame House has been completed. The rocks provide a strong visual element, and locations for additional plant habitat. The continuous presence of water has increased the humidity which benefits the plants.

### **Pathway Extensions**

Within the 1996/1997 budget, the first stage of new paving, in accordance with the Management policy document, was completed near the Peacock fountain. Further work is due this year, linking this paving with the Rolleston Avenue frontage.

### **Apprentice Training**

Four new apprentices commenced a 7000 hour contract on 12 January 1998. Shara Aldridge, Richard Comins, Matthew Harvey and Warren

**FCBG**

PO Box 237  
Christchurch

Vause have completed a course of induction and are settled into their new training programme. We wish them well as they progress through this important stage of their horticultural career.

### **Festival of Flowers**

Guided walks of the Botanic Gardens were conducted by 'Friends' on three evenings of the Garden City Festival of Flowers. I am advised that there was a very good public response and I thank those 'Friends' who gave their time and assisted in guiding the various groups through the features of the gardens.

## **Coming Events**

### **In Brief...**

#### **Guided Walks**

14 March 1998	Saturday	1:30pm
7 April 1998	Tuesday	9:00am
18 April 1998	Saturday	1:30pm
5 May 1998	Tuesday	9:00am
16 May 1998	Saturday	1:30pm
2 June 1998	Tuesday	9:00am
20 June 1998	Saturday	1:30pm

#### **Other Events**

18 March 1998	Wednesday	7:30pm
21 March 1998	Saturday	9:00am
24 March 1998	Tuesday	2:00pm
22 April 1998	Wednesday	7:30pm
27 April 1998	Monday	2:00pm
13 May 1998	Wednesday	7:30pm
27 May 1998	Wednesday	2:00pm
17 June 1998	Wednesday	7:30pm

### **Guided Walks**

The following Saturday walks all begin from the Information Centre at 1:30pm and are conducted by Max Visch.

#### **14 March 1998**

Redwoods and Swamp Cyprresses.

#### **18 April 1998**

The Royal Oaks.

#### **16 May 1998**

The N.Z. Native Plant Section.

#### **20 June 1998**

The Conservatories.

### **Index Seminium**

This is a vital part of the Botanic Gardens work, in exchanging seeds with other Botanic Gardens and institutions around the world.

Several seed collecting trips will be made to various native plant habitats and it is hoped that an opportunity will be made for 'Friends' to be involved in one or more of these trips.

*Warwick Scadden*

*Curator Botanic Services*

### **7 April, 5 May, 2 June 1998**

These Tuesday walks commence from the Information Centre at 9:00am and are conducted by a member of the Botanic Gardens staff.

### **Talks**

#### **Wednesday, 18 March 1998**

7:30pm at the Information Centre

Talk by Warwick Scadden on Botanic Garden Policy.

#### **Saturday, 21 March 1998**

9:00am at the Information Centre

Dieter Steinegg, Tree Management Policy for the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. Dieter is the Botanic Gardens tree surgeon.

#### **Tuesday, 24 March 1998**

2:00pm at the Information Centre (then walk to the Central Rose Garden where the talk will take place).

Bede Nottingham, Botanic Gardens staff member will talk on Roses "Old Problems - New Solutions". In the Information Centre if wet. Afternoon tea to follow.

#### **Wednesday, 22 April 1998**

7:30pm at the Information Centre

Maria Ignatieva - Restoration of St Petersburg Gardens.

#### **Monday, 27 April 1998**

2:00pm at the Information Centre

Tony MacRae will talk on "Creative uses of well known shrubs in the home garden". Tony, a member of the Friends, recently closed down Woodland Nurseries in Harewood Road. He continues to grow shrubs for specialised uses. Afternoon

**Wednesday, 13 May 1998**

7:30pm at the Information Centre

Tony Burnett - Rambles in the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

**Wednesday, 27 May 1998**

2:00pm at the Information Centre

Members plant group. Please bring along interesting plant material from your garden to discuss with members and Botanic Gardens staff. Afternoon tea to follow.

Enquiries regarding weekday afternoon programme to Adrienne Moore - phone 351-5915.

**Wednesday, 17 June 1998**

7:30pm at the Information Centre

Colin Neal visits a bristlecone pine forest.

Deryck Morse reports that the next garden trips will be in spring when a trip will be made to the Selwyn-Darfield area. More about this at a later date.

*Reminders about these events appear during the preceding week in the Christchurch Press Weekend Edition gardening pages under the heading of "Cuttings" and in the Christchurch Star "Around Town" columns.*

## RECENT EVENTS

**The 'Friends' visit Riccarton Bush**

On Saturday 13 December 1997 a group of some 22 people met with Ranger John Moore at Riccarton House.

John gave an introduction to the history of the area, which was the place where John and William Deans arrived with their possessions and assistants in February 1843 and which was called by them Riccarton.

He then conducted the group to view the early exotic trees nearby which are the subject of an article by Max Visch.

The Bush today is a 6.4 hectare remnant of the 22 hectares which it occupied in 1843 and is the last remaining piece of ancient flood-plain forest that once occupied extensive areas of Canterbury.

The Deans family gifted the remaining bush to the people of Canterbury in 1914 with the request that it be known as Riccarton Bush. The appointment of the first manager dates from that year.

Riccarton Bush has a good system of pathways. The first section, behind Riccarton House, is a concrete walkway which provides an all weather surface and reduces maintenance; a more recent development (1994) is the inclusion of an extensive board-walk above the ground level which has the desired effect of keeping visitors from straying into the bush. Other former tracks have been blocked off.

John Armstrong who was appointed by the Provincial Government as Government Gardener in charge of the Domain - later the Botanic Gardens - gave a description of the 'Bush' well over a century ago.

It consisted of mixed bush, mostly white pine and miro. There are, he wrote, "some very fine hinau and pokaka trees, and

also mapou, a few good totaras and some black pines (matai) ..." (Lyttelton Times of 12 April 1905). Of the trees reported by John Armstrong, kahikatea (white pine) is the main canopy tree and the raised root system of this tree with its hammer marked bark can be observed from the board-walk.

Miro or brown pine is no longer present and John Moore said it was probably never common. There are four adult hinau trees, some saplings and many seedlings.

Pokaka and mapou, or red matipo, are common and are increasing. There are no large trees of totara left nor are there any large matai trees although small matai, both natural and planted are present.

Other trees and shrubs pointed out by John were titoki or NZ ash. One adult can be seen at the viewing platform; marble leaf or puta puta weta; NZ myrtle; tarata or lemon wood; narrow leafed lacebark and kaikomako. This last was the wood used by Maori to generate fire. A pointed stick of kaikomako was rubbed up and down a flat piece of mahoe or whitey wood which also is present in the 'Bush'.

Surrounded as it is by homes and gardens, wind and bird dispersed seeds are constantly appearing on the forest floor. Continuous efforts are made to eliminate them.

The number of adventive species is very large. Some of the most troublesome are ivy, periwinkle, sycamore, Jerusalem cherry, old man's beard, blackberry, spindle tree, male fern and many many more.

An unusual removal recently was the North Island lacebark which is an aggressive tree. It was not an original component of Riccarton Bush and a number of large and intermediate trees were cut out.

No longer present although formerly existent are tree fuchsia, ngaio, kanuka and as mentioned previously, miro.

Of the woody and herbaceous native plants there are many different kinds including climbers and ferns, but no tree ferns are to be found.

Small and more extensive grassed areas within the Bush were for a long time kept mowed. These areas have been planted using the container grown plants, sourced from the bush, and propagated in the nursery at the west end.

The future for Riccarton Bush is assured. It is in the hands of people who are dedicated to returning it, as near as possible, to its pristine state, so that this unique heritage may be enjoyed by both students and citizens alike.

*P. Mahan*

### Visit to Riccarton House

Before entering the Riccarton Bush reserve, Ranger John Moore showed us a few of the more notable introduced trees in the grounds around Riccarton House. Planted by members of the Deans family at various times from the mid 1840's on, these trees, now almost a century and a half later, have matured into some very impressive and stately specimens. Many of the older trees bear labels, each stating the tree's common name and the year it was planted.

Conifers are well represented in the tree collection and we noted a well grown specimen of the Coastal Redwood - *Sequoia sempervirens* - native to the Pacific Coast region of California. There they are reputed to grow over 350 feet tall and to be the tallest growing trees in the world. Close to it stands a medium sized Alaska Cypress - *Chamae cyparis nootkatensis*. This cypress much resembles Lawson's Cypress *C. Lawsoniana*, also at Riccarton House, but is much less common in Christchurch and differs from it in its rank smelling foliage, which is harsh to the touch and its yellow male cones. In the Lawson's Cypress, the crushed foliage has a pleasant fruity scent and the male cones have a crimson colour. Another conifer that is rarely seen in New Zealand is the West Himalayan Fir *Abies pindrow* - with its narrow, spire like crown, the Riccarton Bush specimen is the tallest in the country and of national importance. The Spanish Fir *Abies pinsapo* behind the homestead stood out not only because of its great size but also on account of the abundance of cylindrical cones this tree bore on short branches in the top of the tree. The Spanish Fir grows well in Canterbury being very tolerant of a wide variety of soils and climates.

Among broadleaved trees the most outstanding was the Weeping Silver Lime - *Tilia petiolaris* with its massive bole and pendulous branchlets. Planted in 1855, it is the largest of its kind in the country. The species is not known to occur

in the wild, does not reproduce from seed and all specimens in cultivation have been obtained by grafting on *Tilia platyphyllos* - a lime tree that does not produce 'suckers'.

Another tree to take our interest was the Holm Oak - *Quercus ilex* - an evergreen Mediterranean oak, possessing a dense spreading crown of dark green leaves. The specific name *ilex* alludes to the holly like leaves frequently seen on young trees. We much admired the large, white fragrant flowers on the Bull Bay - *Magnolia grandiflora* - native to the South-eastern USA and one of the few hardy evergreen Magnolias grown in Canterbury. The Indian Bean trees - *Catalpa bignonioides* also from the USA showed off their pretty white flowers spotted with yellow and purple dots against a background of soft green foliage.

The tree that really took our breath away was the Jargonelle pear tree, planted in 1850. It is 'huge' for a pear tree, at least 25 metres tall and may well be the largest pear tree in the country. Although split at the base, it seems in good health and each year produces large crops of small, juicy pears. Pear tree No. 19 identified as a 'Durondeau' pear, a French cultivar, is reputed to have been planted in 1846, which if true would make this tree one of the oldest pear trees in the country. Yet unlike the Jargonelle pear, the Durondeau tree is rather smallish and showing reasonable vigour doesn't 'look' its reputed age. One wonders if this tree perhaps is a later generation of this variety.

The Deans family interest in planting exotic trees at an early date has given Christchurch some fine specimens of great interest.

*Max Visch*

## Bits & Pieces

The 'Friends' Committee on behalf of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens is in the process of entering a Registration of Interest with the Christchurch City Council for the future use of the Curator's house and garden.

The objective is to develop the garden as a Home Garden for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit and such amenity plants as would be grown in a Home Garden. The Curator's house to be used for the display of garden produce as well as posters of botanical and horticultural interests.

*Max Visch*

## Feature Article

### Rose and Rhododendron Lead the Way

The following extract is taken from Fay Clayton's third book of her trilogy, "Handbook for the Baffled Gardener"; and is printed with her permission.

The Rose is the most loved flower of western gardeners and the Rhododendron is said to be the second favourite.

Rosa "Rose" *Rosacea* 100-150 species. This genus has been hybridised over thousands of years, with more resultant forms and variety in colour than any other plant.

... and what could be more English! From 1629 it was England's foremost emblem used in heraldry and decoration ... but its name is from Latin, *rosa*, rose. Roses are northern, for the most part growing naturally in that hemisphere only. The earliest English would have known the rose, but, left to themselves would possibly still be calling it sweet briar. Symbol of love this might well be the most loved flower in all the world.

It is thought that *rosa* is related to the Greek word for rose - *rhodon* ...

Rhododendron "Azalea" "Vireya" *Ericaceae* 700-800 species.

*Rhododendron* means rose tree. It's a Greek word but was adopted by the Roman writer, Pliny (c.23-79AD) to name the oleander. All that was so long ago.

In the seventeenth century - 1656 to be exact - some massive and beautiful shrubs were brought into England for the first time. These were plants of the mountains, thriving at altitudes of thousands of metres, and people in England viewing them for the first time were inspired by those great trusses of red flowers. The big question was what to call them. Rhododendron was chosen - rose tree, an apt name full of imagery for this spectacular plant, one of the most important ornamentals in our gardens. Their homelands include the Himalayas and the mountainous regions of China, Europe and America.

There is much to choose from in this genus which ranges in height from ground-hugging forms of up to ten centimetres only, through to massive trees some twenty-five metres tall. Moreover there are over nine thousand named hybrids. No wonder 'rhodos' are so special in our gardens.

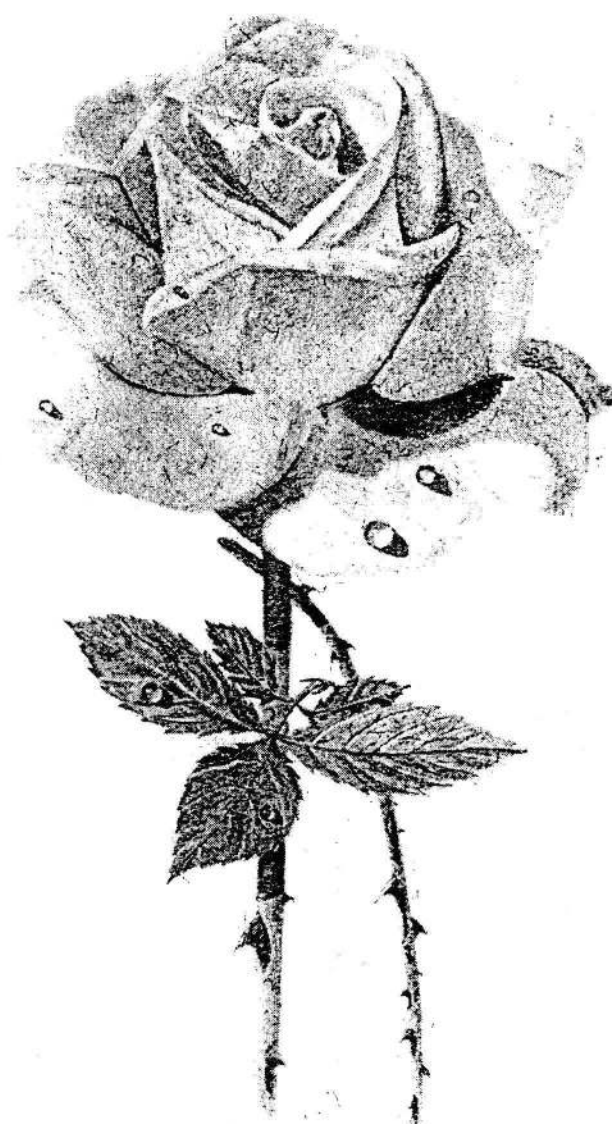
Azalea is a sub-group. In 1753 Linnaeus chose this name, which means dry, a reference to its preferred habitat. Azaleas are dwarf, small-leaved, and may be deciduous or evergreen.

Vireya, a huge sub-group, comprises about a third of the total number of species. They are evergreen shrubs and small trees, and their homelands are tropical areas of south-east Asia. They are very special: their little winged seeds must find a place and germinate within a few weeks or they perish.

Julian Vireya, a seventeenth century Frenchman had his own trade, but did such good work as an amateur botanist that this section of rhododendrons is named after him.

We walk in the dappled shade of our own private gardens, but our thoughts can rise to lofty homelands.

Rose is from Latin, rhododendron from Greek. They lead the way.



**Contact Numbers**

<b>President</b>	Faye Fleming	351-7798	<b>Committee Members</b>	Maria Adamski	366-1701
<b>Immediate Past President</b>	David Given	351-6069		Roy Edwards	338-5969
<b>Minutes Secretary</b>	Jim Crook	358-5845		Tony Burnett	384-1381
<b>Treasurer</b>	Colin Neal	351-8676		Brenda Childs	382-2451
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Ruby Coleman	355-8811		Lynn Heaton	355-7563
<b>Newsletter</b>	Peter Mahan	354-1550		Cullen Pope	025-280-4429
<b>Walks/Guiding</b>	Max Visch	338-2273		Susan Molloy	366-1701
<b>Garden Tours</b>	Deryck Morse	332-6184		Adrienne Moore	351-5915
<b>Ex Officio</b>	Warwick Scadden	366-1701		Dennis Preston	351-4131
	Richard Doyle	366-1701			

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**Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Inc**  
**PO Box 237**  
**Christchurch**  
**New Zealand**

# NEWSLETTER

For Friends of the Botanic Christchurch Gardens Inc.

April, 1998

## AUTUMN PLANT SALE

(for Members only)

9.00 - 11.00 am

Saturday, 2 May

Botanic Gardens Yard

Plants, Sheep Manure and Garden Stakes for sale.

### Change of Speakers

For the April 22 Meeting the speaker is now Tony Burnett,  
*"Rambles in the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland."*

The 13 May meeting is now Maria Ignatieva, Landscape Department, Lincoln University  
*"Restoration of St Petersburg Gardens"*

### For Your Diary

18	April		Saturday	Royal Oak Walk	1.30 pm
22	April		Wednesday	Tony Burnett	7.30 pm
27	April	#	Monday	Tony MacRae	2.00 pm
2	May	*	Saturday	Plant Sale	9.00 am
5	May		Tuesday	Monthly walk	9.00 am
9 or 10	May	@	Saturday or Sunday	Darfield Tour	??
13	May		Wednesday	Maria Ignatieva	7.30 pm
16	May		Saturday	NZ Native Plants walk	1.30 pm
27	May	+	Wednesday	Bring a plant	2.00 pm
2	June		Tuesday	Monthly Walk	9.00 am
17	June		Wednesday	Colin Neal	7.30 pm
20	June		Saturday	Conservatories	1.30 pm

\* Friends Only

# Tony MacRae will speak about Creative Uses of well known shrubs in the Home Garden  
@ Arrangements are being made for a tour of the Darfield and Hororata districts. A day trip to Akaroa is also planned for next Spring. Final details and a list of gardens to be visited will be available at the April 22 meeting or by phoning (after May 3 please) Deryk Morse on 332 6184

+ Bring a Plant to talk about and also to hear about a simple filing system for plant information. The group needs to decide the format and ideas for future meetings.

### Plant Sale Production Standard

The Christchurch Botanic Gardens October plant sale is an event that has occurred for a number of years. As many of you know the first few hours of the sale are always pure pandemonium with customers scrambling to obtain plants. Each year after the plant sale a team of people gather together for a de-briefing to examine how plant production and sale organisation has gone and to look at areas where improvement can be made for the next year.

One of the areas identified has been the standardisation of plant production in order to provide a quality product for the public/customer. Plants selected for the sale need to be plants that are not easily obtained from a local nursery, on MAF plant pest list, difficult to control or have registered plant rights.

Generally plants are to be free of pests and diseases, healthy i.e. not root bound or showing deficiencies, hardened off and correctly named. It is also important that there are no weeds in the plant containers.

**Annual plants** such as bedding, vegetables and herbs will have six to eight plants per punnet. The maximum height when sold will be 150 mm (6 inches).

**Perennials** will be in planter bags size 3-5 where the clump fills a minimum of half of the planter bag surface.

**Shrubs** will be sold in planter bags size 5-8 with a minimum height of 0.5 metres (1.5 feet) except where shrubs have a prostrate habit.

**Trees** will be in planter bags size 8 and upwards with a central leader unless it is a multi-stem species. They should be a minimum of 0.5m (1.5 feet) with a root collar diameter of greater than 15 mm (0.5 inch).

The shrub and tree standard means for the 1998 sale a limited number of these plants will be available. Those that do not meet the standard will be grown on for the following plant sale. We therefore need to think at least a year ahead in order to produce these plants. Behind the scenes the plant sale involves the input of a number of groups. If you would like to be part of any of the following groups please contact the appropriate person.

Seed cleaning	Meets weekly.	Duties: working with Sue Molloy to prepare seeds for the seed exchange.	Contact: Dorothy Croucher 385 3203
Guiding	Meets monthly	Duties: Compiling material to assist guides in the Gardens	Contact: Lyn Heaton 355 7563
Propagating *	Group A Tuesday 9.30-12.30  Group B Thursday 9.30-12.30	Duties: weed plants, check labels, list plants, sort and repot plants, pot up collected plant materials, pot up cuttings and tubbed material from gardeners.	Contact: Faye Fleming 351 7798
Plant material Collecting		Duties: Collect plant material from sections for the potting shed teams	Contact: Maria Adamski 325 2330
Bulb Group		Duties: Planting bulbs in pots for sale	Contact: Adrienne Moore 351 5915
Nomenclature (naming) group		Duties: Ensure plants are correctly labelled	Contact: Max Visch 338 2273
Catalogue Group		Duties: Compile and update plant sale catalogue.	Contact: Lyn Heaton 355 7563

\* If you are interested in an afternoon group on propagating please call Faye on 351 7798.