

Newsletter

For Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Inc
To Promote, Protect, & Preserve

No 47, Winter 2001

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Accommodation and buildings are behind two recent endeavours being pursued by some of the Friends. The outcome of one is more easily predicted than the other.

A small working group, under David Given, is exploring possible uses for the Robert McDougall building which in time will be vacated by the Art Gallery. The Canterbury Museum has already indicated the McDougall could fit into a long term development and reconfiguration plan for the Museum.

As the building has a very strong presence in the Botanic Gardens a number of Friends believe all or part of the gallery should have a Gardens component. It is also seen as a possible site or base for the Friends of the Botanic Gardens. However, to be able to make sensible calls on it we need to have a better handle on what our requirements are now and in the future. The working party are now exploring and developing a breakdown of what our needs are.

The second project is also related to buildings and space. The staff at the Information Centre will be putting more displays up in the centre. The displays can often take up a lot of room and need to be broken down every time a talk or meeting is held. The displays will probably have a six (6) week showing before being replaced. A recent meeting with staff, Botanic Gardens Curator and Friends agreed that a joint programme for all of next year activities be prepared. This would allow us to slot talks between the breaking down and putting up new displays. This should help avoid having to hold talks at the horticulture centre which, unfortunately, we will have to do this year.

Finally a big thank you to David Given for putting together a submission on behalf of the friends to the Christchurch City Council Annual financial plan for the year 2002. We are, obviously, advocating stronger support for the Botanic Gardens.

Dennis Preston
President

Coming Plant Sale

Bulbs in pots will be for sale again this year. The next Newsletter will give the date of the sale in to be held in September. *Spiloxene alba* are on display in the Alpine House at the time of writing this note and will be one of the more unusual bulbs for sale. The rare *Oxalis* which are often sought by collectors are very attractive and not to be avoided just because some of the common species are a nuisance. We have three cultivars for sale. Look for further details as soon as you get your Newsletter in September.

Jane McArthur

Donations towards the purchase of seats for the 'Friends' millennium project in the Children's Playground area would be gratefully welcome and could be sent to Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, P.O. Box 2553, Christchurch

FCBG

PO Box 2553
Christchurch

Recent Events

Butchart Gardens

Established by the Butchart family in 1904 on the site of the family limestone quarry. 50 acres in area and situated 22 kms north of Victoria, on Vancouver Island B.C. Canada.

The gardens consist of a comprehensive collection of many fine tree specimens comprising 140 different species from around the world. Spectacular bedding displays through the seasons, are based on original concepts, these include 135 000 spring bulbs imported from the Netherlands and a huge variety of flowering plants. Main areas of interest include, magnificent rose gardens containing 2500 plants. Italian gardens, Japanese gardens and a world-renowned sunken garden with beautiful night lighting, complementing the attraction. Exquisite baroque statues and fountains abound.

These gardens are of truly international standard and renown, with many hundreds of thousands of tourists from around the world visiting them annually, after 2 hours travel from the mainland by ferry. Fireworks displays and concerts are held weekly throughout the summer.

There are also many fine amenities to serve the public. These include the following – a plant I. D. Centre, two restaurants, Information Centre, Seed and Gift Shop, Coffee Shop and First Aid Centre.

World Heritage Parks of the Rockies.

Ice Fields Parkway, consists of a 230 km highway viewing alpine splendour from Jasper to Lake Louise.

Key attractions include Athabasca Falls on the Athabasca River. This huge mass of white water eventually drains into the Arctic Ocean, many hundreds of kilometres north. Columbia Ice field is the largest ice field in the Rockies at 337 sq km, it contains the Athabasca Glacier, here ice packed up to 305 m deep supports huge snow coaches that

transport tourists out onto the glacier.

There are a seemingly never ending profusion of mountain peaks, many rising over 3000m with beautiful giant hanging glaciers clinging to their upper slopes along the Parkway.

Vast forests clothe the mountainsides, from the snowline to lake or highway level. The numerous world famous alpine lakes that complete this wonderful picture, change colour regularly dependent on the mood of the weather. Reflecting sunlight, cloud, wind, snow and rock flour in suspension all producing subtle colour variations to the surface water of lakes.

Many mammals abound, making the Rockies their home these include black grizzly bears, moose, elk, mule deer, big horn sheep, mountain goats, cougars, coyotes, wolves, hoary marmots, red squirrels, Columbian ground squirrels and Pikas.

Tony Burnett

Curators House and Garden

A large crowd turned up for this interesting visit, which was ably conducted by Maria Adamski.

The new potage-type garden plots held so much in such small areas, the familiar and the unfamiliar vegetable and fruits were in abundance. There were aubergines, capsicums, gourds and enormous sunflowers with seeds ready for the birds. Herbs of many varieties climbing and non-climbing beans, you name it and it was certain to be there. The cranberry bushes intrigued me especially as I had only associated them as jelly with turkey!

Dr Colin Knight added to the interest with an open invitation to explore the lovely Curators House now used and beautifully arranged as a restaurant.

Ruby Coleman

Harvest Festival at the Curators

In mid-March it was decided to hold a Harvest Festival at the Curator's House on April 1st. After discussion with the Propagating Teams, we realised we couldn't mount a worthwhile sale of plants at such short notice and at this time of year, so it was decided to have a display of Autumn colour to be found in the Gardens along with publicity material for the Friends. A Walk around the Curator's Garden by Louise Morgan on 24th March aroused so much interest it was clear the Harvest Festival would be a success.

And so it proved. Art and craft displays with garden themes at the front of the House, paintings of succulent vegetables around the veggie patches, children's art competitions, a display of Trent's herbs along the paths and on the triangular lawn many tables of perfect fruits and vegetables grown by members of the Fruit & Vegetable Circle. The Friends of the Botanic Gardens slung their banner between two trees at the back behind three tables of displays.

Our wonderful floral arrangement was shown on a raised stand under one of the trees. This display was created by Kay Thomson, a well known Ikebana specialist and instructor, and contained wheat, pine branches, red hydrangeas and glowing yellow crab-apples.

For our examples of Autumn colour we had been able to borrow specimen vases from the Horticulture Society and discreetly raid the Gardens and Mona Vale. We had plenty of colourful flowers and leaves, though not all stood up to the warm weather. Fortunately it was not windy. A display of Autumn bulbs and alpines in a flat ceramic bowl fared much better and was still fresh next day after a night in the Curator's House Bar. One table was given over to succulents, and the third held Friends' Membership forms and information. Friends were available to talk to the many interested visitors.

The Festival started slowly but interest built steadily through the lovely sunny afternoon. The day was successful in the attention it drew to the Curator's Garden and the pleasures of growing vegeta-

bles and fruit at home. Whether the Friends of the Botanic Gardens have gained any new members from our presence remains to be seen but we certainly added colour and interest to the occasion. It was a worthwhile effort. Next year we shall be prepared and shall hope to hold a sale as well. Many thanks to all those Staff and Friends who helped, either on the day or behind the scenes, or with ideas and good counsel beforehand.

Gerry Constable

Gardens 2001, Congress

Canberra, Australia., 17th - 20th April 2001.

On the 16th of April I travelled to Canberra to attend the Gardens 2001 Congress for Botanic Gardens. 170 delegates attended the Congress. There were representatives from Botanic Gardens and Educational and Horticultural institutions from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore and South America.

Over the three days 68 papers were presented, with speakers from Britain, USA, China, New Zealand and Australia covering the following four main themes: Management in the 21st Century, Public Programmes/ Education, Horticulture, and Plant Science/ Conservation.

From the congress there were three principal conceptions that came through from all the speakers that were relevant to all Botanic Gardens including Christchurch.

Firstly all Botanic Gardens no matter what size, even if they seem to be doing the same things and growing the same plants, are **unique**. Secondly it is up to us as Botanic Gardens to identify that uniqueness along with why we are important and to **promote** that by using education programmes, interpretation, forming partnerships, and marketing. Lastly to be **the best** we can be. This does not mean being better than any other gardens but to identify the resources available and using them to their maximum.

The congress finished on a discussion on the need to form networks and how this may help us to achieve our goals. It was clear, from this congress,

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that as we move into the 21st century future development at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens must embrace these ideals.

During the Congress I was able to visit the Australian National Botanic Gardens situated in Canberra. This Botanic Garden is devoted purely to native plants of Australia.

Following the congress I participated in the field trip to the Booderee Botanic Gardens. This is situated in the middle of the Booderee National Park on the NSW coast at Jervis Bay. To get there from Canberra we travelled east through Braidwood and Budawang National Park to Batemans Bay and then north along the coast to Nowra for an overnight stay. The next day after spending the morn-

ing at Booderee BG we headed north to Fitzroy Falls in the Morton National Park and then back to Canberra through Goulburn on the Hume Highway.

My last day in Australia was spent in Sydney visiting the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney.

For any further information on the Congress and other visits of my trip please do not hesitate to contact me.

Finally I would like to thank the Friends for their generosity in making the Staff Award available, which helped make this trip possible.

Bede Nottingham

Articles

Early memories of the Botanic Gardens

With the help of his diaries, John Taylor looks back.

January 6th 1941 is a long time ago. Fifty-eight years, in fact. On this bright summer's day, at the age of fifteen, I commenced work as a "trainee" at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. At this time apprenticeships didn't exist for young people.

Every year towards the end of September there was an annual Daffodil Day, usually on a Sunday. Some volunteer staff, together with outside volunteers, would rattle donation boxes at each of the entrances to the Gardens to raise funds for various Garden projects but mostly it was used for planting more daffodils in the Woodlands area. After an appeal, bulbs were donated from private gardens or given by commercial growers. Groups of staff would plant the bulbs and in my diary on June 22nd I noted that I planted about 7000 on that day. We worked in pairs so that figure should be halved.

For carting rubbish or loads of sand or rock for the various works under construction there were two horses and drays in operation. These clopped their steady way around the gravel pathways as they went about their tasks and each night they were

tied up in the yard close to the Christ's College swimming pool. The Rock Garden was being constructed at the time under the careful and detailed supervision of "Wattie" Brockie, a friendly, knowledgeable Scotsman who made great use of the horses and drays for much of the heavy physical work. Of course all the loading and much of the unloading had to be done by human physical effort but the unloading wasn't so bad when a pin holding the dray in position could be released.

The Second World War had been going for some time and shortages of certain imported items were beginning to be felt. The Government began rationing petrol by issuing coupons and these were allocated according to the size of your car. Jim McPherson's Austin car was always mobile because he was a volunteer stores officer in the Home Guard and was allocated extra coupons for his army duties during weekends and evenings. The Botanic Gardens flat deck truck seemed to be allocated enough coupons for its requirements. To get petrol from the bulk storage tank in the Gardens a book was signed first. Then the pump hose was put into the vehicle's tank and the petrol flowed by swinging back and forth on a long handle in the front of the pump.

In the piece of land adjacent to the United Tennis Courts (down from the present car park) and close

to the South Bridge there was a fenced in nursery area with hedge shelters and pathways. Between this nursery and the car park was the main dumping ground for everything that was cleaned out of the shrub borders, the lawn clippings, the pruning, the branches, the spent soil and the debris from the glasshouses. Mostly the autumn leaves were separately stacked for composting.

During the early years of the war a lot of the nursery area was used for growing vegetables for the sole purpose of harvesting the seed. This seed was gathered, dried and packed by women volunteers, a sort of Land Army group and then it was sent to England to help in their food production campaign. Jim McPherson, the Director, coordinated the volunteers and arranged the shipping detail. I recall being told that it was believed that one of the ships carrying a consignment of seed when crossing the Atlantic in convoy was sunk by German U Boats.

At this time several of the Gardens trainees were in the Armed Forces. Ted Barnett, son of the late Morris (M.J.) Barnett, (at that time Superintendent of Parks and Reserves, Christchurch City Council), was in the Army in the Middle East. Sadly Ted was killed in the battle at Tobruk. Also killed in the Middle East around this time was another promising young trainee, Bill Treleavan. My own very close friend, Wally Lauder, had become a pilot in the Air Force and he was killed on active service while bringing his Dakota aircraft back to England from France.

What Sort of Fertiliser Does This Plant Need?

Many gardeners feel very insecure when confronted with the decision of what kind of fertilisers (if any) they should use around a particular plant. Should they use 'chooky poo', artificial fertilisers, other animal manures or compost, and how much should they apply? Some advice can be obtained for local native species or for commercial crops, from the regional Department of Horticulture or local nursery. It is somewhat more difficult to obtain advice or to readily find literature that will indicate the amount and type of fertiliser that an individual exotic tree or shrub species requires, particularly ornamentals.

A method that I feel is reasonable and usually works for me in the scarcity of written information is to try and relate to the natural conditions that would occur for the plant in its native habitat. For example some Australian plants may be native to tropical areas that are subject to cyclonic conditions (warm, windy and wet) during certain times of the year, some come from arid areas that are relatively dry and hot, and others are native to the cooler temperate regions.

These differing and sometimes extreme conditions also prevail in other large countries such as Africa, India and the USA. The natural fertilisers available in each of the plant habitats for the native plants are quite different in quantity and type and need to be thought about.

Smaller countries such as New Zealand, the British Isles and Europe, while they may not experience the same degree of extreme contrast in the climatic conditions, nevertheless also contain wide variations of plant habitats. These range from low-mild temperate zones to harsh, cold alpine conditions. Each climatic zone will support a natural native plant population and also animal life that exploits it.

When one really starts to think about the fertiliser needs for, let's say, a mango tree (which originates from India/Asia), we certainly can relate to the fact that, while the climate and soil in which we may select to grow it may be similar to its natural habitat, the tree no longer has the same company of animals, birds and other wild life that would gather around and exploit it in its native environment. For example, in India there are wild elephants, monkeys, pigs, cows and many more large animals that would gather around the tree at harvest time. In Australia, the largest wild life are emus and kangaroos and these do not tend to stay in one place for long, or in close company like herds of cattle. When a kangaroo leaves a deposit of dung, it is relatively small and spread out. When a herd of gluttonous, belching, elephants feast on the ripe mangoes in India, I am sure that these beasts leave really meaningful amounts of dung behind.

This would be true of the cattle, who would probably spend the night camped under the trees in large

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family groups. As for the wild pigs and monkeys...well...it would be one hell of a party!

The point I am trying to make is that this would be an annual occurrence for the mango tree, which would have evolved to cope with this and would probably miss it if it did not happen. This would also be true of other trees in these countries, where each tree would attract exploitation by a range of different animals.

These animals, as well as donating large quantities of manure, also die and return to the soil.

In countries and climatic regions with few large animals, plants would have had to cope without any large donations of manure and, generally, it is true that many plants from these locations resent the application of fertilisers.

In desert conditions, the plants are small and often grow thorny, sparse foliage and would hardly attract the attention of, or support, many large animals. Most of the animals that are native to these arid areas are usually small and can manage on little extra water other than that which they obtain from their food. They would not leave significant amounts of dung (animal manure) and the few larger animals that do eke out a living are of the athletic type that often have to cover vast areas to gather sufficient nourishment.

In the less harsh landscapes, such as lush grassy plains and rain forests with the abundant sources of foliage and fruits, larger animals and birds have evolved to exploit it. Think about it!

From Property Care Industry Vol 1. No. 5
By John Mulholland author of "Maintaining Healthy Shrubs and Trees"

Ducks of the Botanic Gardens

There are three main species of duck in the Botanic Gardens: Mallard, Grey Duck and Scaup

The Mallard and the Grey Duck interbreed and have formed a large population of hybridised ducks. It is estimated that now 80% of the duck population are hybrids within the Gardens area.

The native Scaup population colonised the ponds and waterways around the Gardens only 2-3 years ago, however, they are being seen in ever increasing numbers.

During duck shooting season the number of ducks in the Botanic Gardens and Victoria Lake greatly increases however this also coincides with acorn season (which ducks love to eat). It is thought that the ducks come here for the acorns more than knowing when the shooting season is about to begin.

Mallard
(Introduced)

Anas platyrhynchos

The male and female Mallard have quite different markings from each other, with the male having a green head and orange/brown breast whereas the female is more similar to our native Grey Duck with mottled brown plumage.

The Mallard was introduced from North America to Christchurch in 1866 and it was several years before the ducks established themselves in the Gardens.

The Mallard nests are either in the fork of a tree or under rank vegetation near water, with about a dozen eggs being laid.

Ducklings hatch after about four weeks and will spend the first few days on the ponds before moving onto the river.

Grey Duck
(Native)

Anas superciliosa

The pure Grey Duck has a distinctive patterned face, a pale throat and green wing *speculum*.

However, because of breeding with the Mallard, hybridisation between these species has blurred the genetic identity of the Grey Duck.

Slowly the introduced Mallard is overwhelming the Grey Duck population. The proportion of Grey Ducks in the population has declined from 95% in 1960 to less than 20% in 1985.

The biology, ecology and social behaviour patterns

of the Grey Ducks is much like that of Mallards. However the Grey Duck lays approximately ½ the numbers of eggs than that of the Mallard. Also the Grey Duck appears to be fussier about where they will nest

Scaup *Anythya novaeseelandiae*
(Native)

The smallest of New Zealand's ducks and our only native diving duck it is often referred to as the "Black Teal". Scaup spend much of their time searching lake and riverbeds for small aquatic creatures, like insects and fish.

Occurring on both of New Zealand's major islands

and a Christchurch City Council census has revealed that our city is home to approximately 20% of the world's Scaup population.

The males have contrasting yellow eyes and females have white cheek patches between their eyes and bill and both have dark plumage. Scaup nests are placed near water often in sedge clumps and clutches consist of six or seven eggs.

This rare duck was much more common before European settlement, however the numbers again are beginning to increase around the city waterways and in the Botanic Gardens.

Information supplied by Staff of the Information Centre

Friends Jottings

The International Plant Names Index

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, The Harvard University Herbaria and the Australian National Herbarium have collaborated in producing an "International Plant Names Index" (IPNI). The Index is a database of the names and associated basic bibliographical details of all seed plants, which are gradually being checked and standardized.

The data on the IPNI is freely available and can be accessed by computer on the Internet at www.ipni.org

Robert McDougall Art Gallery

This beautiful historic building on land in our Botanic Gardens will become available in 2003. According to the 1925 Parliamentary Act... "and the said land and buildings thereon shall revert to ... part of Reserve 25 and the control thereof shall revert to the Christchurch Domain Board".

I do believe that means the McDougall Building and the land will come back to the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. We are waiting for the City Council to release a legal opinion on this important Reserves Act.

The Friends have a working party that is actively pursuing the possibilities and practicalities of using the McDougall as a shared amenity. Maybe with The Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, The Canterbury Museum, The Friends of the Canterbury Museum, The Christchurch Garden City Trust and similar groups.

Our Working Party is –
Dr David Given (Chair), Tony Burnett, Helen Constable, Dennis Preston (ex officio), Jim Crook (minutes), Alison Fox (minutes assistant) and Janet Begg.

If you would like to contact us we would welcome your help. Thank you.

Janet Begg phone 385 5114

Subscriptions are due. If yours is unpaid please send it to:

The Treasurer
Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens
P.O. Box 2553
Christchurch

Single subscription \$12.00
Double subscription \$15.00

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Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Inc
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Coming Events 2001

June 5th	Tuesday 9 a.m. Meteorological Station	Walk	<i>Weather or not: Identifying and recording weather patterns and a look at the instruments used for these purposes.</i> Brian Appleton.
June 17th	Sunday 2 p.m. Watling lounge Canterbury Horticultural Society	Talk	<i>Botanical Art through the Ages</i> by Jo Ewing
June 23rd	Saturday 1.30 p.m. Information Centre	Walk	<i>Kauri's, Monkey Puzzles and other related trees</i> by Adrienne Moore
July 3rd	Tuesday 9 a.m. Information Centre	Walk	<i>Pruning Techniques: On fruit trees and ornamental trees</i> with Kevin Garnett
July 21st	Saturday 1.30 p.m. Information Centre	Walk	<i>Japan's contribution to our Garden Flora</i> with Max Visch
July 22nd	Sunday 2 p.m. Watling lounge Canterbury Horticultural Society	Talk	<i>Botany of Banks Peninsula</i> by Hugh Wilson Manager of Hinewai Botanical Reserve
August 7th	Tuesday 9 a.m. Information Centre	Walk	<i>Herbaceous Perennial Roundup: A look at the required maintenance</i> with Maria Adamski
August 12th	Sunday 3 p.m. Watling lounge Canterbury Horticultural Society	Talk	<i>Charles Darwin</i> by Professor Reiner Lainger
August 25th	Saturday 1.30 p.m. Information Centre	Walk	<i>Gentleman in my Garden' their contribution to the naming of plants</i> with Adrienne Moore
September 4th	Tuesday 9 a.m. Information Centre	Walk	<i>Life under Glass: A look behind the scenes at the Show/Glass houses</i> with Greg Salton
September 19th	Wednesday 7.30 p.m. Information Centre	Talk	<i>Alpines of New Zealand and Around the World</i> by Joe Cartman
September 22nd	Saturday 1.30 p.m. Information Centre	Walk	<i>New Zealand Native Conifers</i> with Max Visch

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.

Raffle Prize winner

Shirley Sinclair was the winner of the raffle book 'Perennials' which was donated by Barbara De Lambert