

Newsletter

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

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FCBG

PO Box 2553
Christchurch

President's Message

As the Annual General Meeting of the Friends draws closer I have mixed feelings about our future. These feelings derive from thinking about the needs of our members and whether we are meeting their needs in a satisfying and challenging manner. Are we providing a programme to attract the diversity that makes organisations rich in experience and talent? Are we inclusive of just the mainstream in Christchurch or are we stretching towards a wider representation that is more than numbers? Holding our numbers might bring financial security but it could be a sign that we are standing still. Certainly from a leadership and management perspective we are well behind with a long-term unfilled Vice President position and other senior positions that will become vacant.

This may all sound niggly but in 2004 groups have to be well organised and visible to make a difference. It is not enough to do what you did last year despite how comforting that may sound.

The Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens has undeniable strengths. It has some passionate individuals who are knowledgeable and energetic about plants, education, young people, City Council policy, membership, guiding... They are the committed ones. We also have a silent majority who seem to applaud what we do but who are satisfied with a lower level of involvement. That may be acceptable too as we head towards an ageing New Zealand. The trend towards a large group of willing subscribers and a dwindling number of committed officeholders and volunteer workers is increasing.

At present the Botanic Gardens and the Friends are in the news. The Christchurch City Council has an indicative budget for 2006 with some \$10 million for building and development in the Gardens. Already trees are being sourced to replace and add to the existing stock and a mass of background work is underway including visitor and design surveys. David Given and Jeremy Hawker, (Garden Curators) and their staff need to know that we are supporting them with feedback and informed comments. It does not have to be just positive "feel good" endorsements of the status quo but genuine and critical comments that will lead to an improved Botanic Garden for our city.

This is where the Friends can make a difference. We have that advantage of being an independent voice outside the City Council but supportive of the Gardens. To commit to the tasks outlined above we need you to make use of any modern technology at hand. We want you on Email, using website links, writing letters and designing graphics. We have made major gains in the potting shed and guiding. We are in good shape financially. You do not have to "cold call" or door-knock to fulfill our objectives for the Gardens. Now let us tackle our management and leadership issues. Please offer your services to our committee. Send us your name as potential treasurer, vice president, or committee member – it is challenging and energy sapping but it is also rewarding. None who have done it have regretted their decision to serve.

Faye Fleming, President

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead.

Gardens' News

From the Curator

It was David Henry Thoreau, immortalised by his book "Walden Pond", who wrote that, "I frequently tramped eight or ten miles through the deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beech-tree, or a yellow birch, or an old acquaintance among the pines". Trees have a magical effect on people and it is little wonder that the current seasonal surveys being carried out at the Botanic Gardens show that the trees of the Botanic Gardens are among the aspects most appreciated by the public.

Nor is this more obvious than at the present time, when the autumn colours of many of our trees are so brilliant. The reds, oranges and yellows of the deciduous trees are a last defiant burst of display before the somber tones of winter are upon us. It is not just exotics that show colour – subtle autumn tints are present on many of our native trees as well.

Trees are a major topic when grappling with management issues in the Gardens. The 'ageing tree problem' has been well aired in the media. People now realize that trees have a finite life, but what we really face is that many of our trees were planted at the one time in the past and so are coming to senescence at about the same rate. The real issue is that we do not have a good spread of age structure among our Botanic Garden trees.

This brings me to two questions: "why remove trees" and "what is planted in their place". A primary reason for removing trees, especially some older specimens, is that they pose a hazard to the public. Another linked reason is that the cost of maintaining a tree through cabling, etc., may outweigh benefits and values. We have some trees that are simply in the wrong place but are too old to be shifted. Another consideration is that we have some genera over-represented and taking out carefully selected specimens allows the planting of species that have poor representation. Is a tree impeding good landscaping or function of garden facilities – this is another consideration.

Then, what do we do when a tree is removed? We can replant with the same species. We can plant a more desirable species, perhaps one that has an appealing appearance, or conservation or

cultural value. We may decide to not plant at all but to develop the site as open space.

The important thing is that we do not allow things to be done by default. Trees are a long term and valuable acquisition. Did you know that within the Botanic Gardens we have between fifteen and twenty million dollars worth of trees? Once planted most trees will outlive a human generation.

Finally, it is important to realize that, for many people, trees are inspirational. American poet, Walt Whitman, in his "Song of the Open Road", asks, "Why are there trees I never walk under but), large and melodious thoughts descend upon me?"

We may not all be poets but I am sure that we can empathize with the inspiring nature of trees that Whitman speaks of. Let's value, protect and enhance one of our most precious assets – the trees of the Botanic Gardens.

David Given

What's Happening in the Gardens

The autumn survey of visitors to the Gardens is the third in a series of surveys which are providing information and statistics for planning purposes.

The water and irrigation requirements in the BG and Hagley Park are being investigated and a start has been made on the project for interpretation, signage, plant labels, pamphlets and web site.

Some new plants are being sourced for the new garden to reflect Gondwana vegetation and will be grown on ready for eventual planting. A long lead in time is involved when planting new collections.

David Given is working on the strategic plan which eventually becomes the management plan. The working party document is expected to be available for public comment around October this year and major funding is proposed for the 2006/7 Christchurch City Council budget.

Arbor Day

J Sterling Morton, (1832-1934) former Secretary of Agriculture in USA, founded Arbor Day in 1872 in Nebraska. Since then Arbor Day has been celebrated worldwide as a special day to plant trees. More information on <http://www.arborday.org/arborday/history.cfm>

Recent Events

Propagators' Report

We have been living through 'Interesting Times' since Christmas. The usual problems with desiccating Nor'westers alternated with heavy Southerly storms caused the cancellation of the Family Day in the Park on 15th February. We postponed our big Sale until the following Sunday, a lovely day, but of course the supporting events of the Floral Festival could not be repeated, so it was a quieter day than we had hoped. We took a sale trolley full of offerings to the Bring-a-Plant meeting on 8 March and on 27 March we held an impromptu sale, particularly of Perennials reaching their 'best by' date. Again the weather was against us. The wind was phenomenal and even blew over the Sale Trolley! But the Gazebo stayed firm, tied to chairs in which helpers sat during fierce gusts.

Plants have sold well from the trolley outside the Information Centre, thanks to staff help and constant refilling from the Propagating Teams. The Gardens' Staff gave us 20 Banana plants to pot up after their display days were done. We were delighted to have them and sold them all, many for use in flower arrangements.

Jane McArthur did very well with a bulb sale at the Alpine Society Conference on Bulbs and Alpines at Lincoln in February. She had compiled a very useful list of the bulbs for sale, many of which were rare or unusual. Jane would now like to concentrate on the bulb collection, leaving the Alpine plants to Diane Percy who trained at the Gardens and has knowledge of this area. Do check the trolley regularly as the small bulbs will be put there for sale as they are coming into flower.

The Propagating Teams would be happy to show Friends around our Nursery Area on our work days and we always welcome new members. Please phone me if you can help on our Sale days in September and October.
Helen Constable Phone 9809358

Bring a Plant

Tony Cooper ran a native plant nursery within the Botanic Gardens in Pietermaritzburg in Natal before coming to New Zealand.

His discussion on South African plants at our 'Bring a Plant' meeting included growing hints and fascinating history and stories of the traditional uses of native plants in South Africa. Among plants he brought along and described were **Agapanthus**; (roots used to make necklaces worn to produce healthy strong babies), **Kniphofia**; (named for Johan Hieronymus Kniphof a German Professor of medicine at Erfurt, whose eighteenth Century *Herbarium Vivum* was illustrated with prints made from actual inked plants. In Africa, the Kniphofia leaves are used as a snake repellent around huts), **Leonotis**; (wonderful nectar for birds), **Plumbago**; (wood ground for snuff for headaches), **Zantedeschia**; (leaves used as poultice for headaches), **Aloes**; (uses include medicines, cosmetics and drinks), and **Clivias**; (Kaffir lily, named for Lady Charlotte Clive Duchess of Northumberland.)

Thank you Tony

Canterbury Botanical Art Society

Following the recent Botanical Art Exhibition in the Botanic Gardens' Information Centre, the Canterbury Botanical Art Society has been formed. The inaugural meeting was held at the Botanic Gardens' Cafe on Tuesday morning 20th April with 12 enthusiastic people attending and six apologies.

The aim of the group is to foster botanical art by holding regular working monthly meetings as well as workshops and an annual exhibition. As in other centres the Botanical Art Society will work in close co-operation with the Botanic Gardens and the Friends. However until the new facilities are built for the Gardens, there is currently no suitable space to hold workshops or meetings there.

A two-day introductory workshop on botanical painting was held at the Avic Hill Centre, Memorial Ave, 8 & 9th May. Tutor Dianne Smith. The venue for meetings will now be the Francis Shurrock Studio, in the Arts Centre with the next meeting on Tuesday 1st June 9am to 1pm.

For more information -
Phone Dianne Smith 03 312 0318 or
Irene McBryde 343 0368

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Recent Staff led walks

These were well attended. We are most grateful for the time staff give for these walks. Thank you all.

Angus Allan led an action packed walk on Tree Evaluation which attracted many new faces. A casual passer by that morning would have wondered at the scattered group of people wielding sticks, looking skyward, and pacing oddly. We were observing trees for their height, age, health, growth and future prospects. Seven trees near the Children's playground gave plenty of practice and understanding of how important it is to choose suitable trees, their site in relationship to other plantings and care from an early age.

Shara Barclay gave a lively discussion on the history and care of Bonsai and transformed a small regular shaped conifer into the first stages of a true bonsai.

Jeremy Hawker explored the variety of the Gardens' Palm Collection both outdoors and inside the Conservatories. These plants are monocotyledons, evergreen and growth comes from the soft tip of the stem. Palms are mostly from tropical areas of the world and have two main forms; those with fan shaped leaves and others are having pinnate or feathery leaves. They are valued for their architectural forms, give shelter, shade and economic products such as food (dates, coconuts, sago, sugar), oil and fibre. Of particular interest was the large specimen of *Rhaphostylis sapida*, Nikau Palm in Cuninghame House. The southern limit for nikaus and palms in the Southern Hemisphere, is the Akaroa Peninsula and the Chathams.

Halswell Quarry Park Visit

John Moore, Ranger at Halswell Quarry Park, and John Taylor, President of the Friends of Halswell Quarry Park, hosted our visit on Sat 3 April. After our walk and their stories, we were impressed by the vision for this former quarry and how much has been already achieved. The old Quarry area and surrounds have been developed for recreation and the Sister Cities Gardens display plant collections from six different geographical areas. This creative use of the site works very well and we look forward to future visits to keep up with the progress. Many thanks John M and John T. Daily

Daily Guiding

The first season for daily guided tours in the Botanic Gardens finished on April 30th after eight months and 300 satisfied visitors. Most of the visitors were tourists either from overseas or other parts of New Zealand. The tours will start again on 1st September for the 2004-5 season. There were many unknowns and some decisions were on trial in this first season. It has been decided that all the daily walks next season will leave from the Canterbury Museum entrance and that bigger name badges are required. Signage has been temporary and by September 2004 new, smart and more permanent signs will be in place.

Many of the guides were surprised at the changes in the Botanic Gardens on a daily basis. They have learnt that you need to be versatile and have an eclectic knowledge as well as being adaptable to the needs of visitors, the weather, plants and seasons. The guides are enthusiastic knowledgeable people who are passionate about the Gardens and enjoy sharing. They have also become a very supportive and cohesive group, willing to help each other. Monthly professional development sessions for the guides were held and were great fun as well as informative. They will continue through the winter. Our thanks are extended to the staff who were helpful and supportive of this new venture and to our Guide Subcommittee (Ann Low, Sandy Bain, and Ineke van Florenstein Mulder) who will have a bigger role next season. This has been an exciting and very successful venture for the Friends.

Faye Fleming, Guide

Friends' Guided Walks

We seldom think of who was involved in the movement of plants around the world. See Jen

Articles

Daphne Banks - Stories from the Botanic Gardens in the 1950s

Daphne's career was launched when a helpful teacher found out that women were accepted for work at the Botanic Gardens and arranged an interview with Mr. Barnett, then the Director of Botanic Gardens, Parks and Reserves. The interview was successful and Daphne started work in January 1952, when Huia Gilpin was Curator.

Daphne's first day was spent helping in the glasshouse to redo the cactus display and stake display plants such as ornamental peppers. These were used to decorate the back of "the benches" in Townend House.

There were no apprenticeships for women then. Their starting pay was one step up from the apprentice pay rate, but the women did not receive six monthly pay rises as the apprentices did.

Women were permitted to do the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture exams. Daphne recalls "Learning for the RNZIH examination was done by studying some subjects such as Botany and Book keeping at Christchurch Technical College at evening and Saturday morning classes and by correspondence. Demonstrations were also given e.g. the staff at Linwood guiding us through taking a lawn mower to pieces, cleaning, reassembling and carefully resetting the sharpened blades and bottom plate. A lot was learnt watching older staff and asking questions. Lunchtime could be spent going to a particular area e.g. Native Section or Rock Garden armed with a Box Brownie camera and a notebook for names and particulars of noticed plants."

One of the requirements was to learn about digging, but women were not supposed to dig. However they did manage to practice on the Herbaceous border.

"Mutuals" were held for staff at the Curator's House. These were learning sessions based on the Kew model, where the members were mutually improved by sharing their knowledge and giving a "lecture" on a particular interest, as well as learning how to conduct meetings.

One of the five women on the staff when Daphne joined was Pat Barton, who was in charge of propagating. Pat married Keith Stewart who was then also a staff member. Pat now lives in Wanaka and is well known for *Helleborus* 'White Magic' which she selected from a batch of seedlings she was given. [She built up stocks of this one different plant and in 1999, about 20,000 plants were produced by the family business along with many other hellebore varieties. (Rachael Vogan, Christchurch Star 25/6/99)].

Women were not allowed to work out in the grounds in the early 1950s but Daphne remembers Pat picking flowers for Council meetings and for decorating the Airport, a job later inherited by Pat's successor. Floral arrangements were done for the monthly City Council meetings (held in the Council Chambers which were then in Manchester Street) and more often at the airport when the passenger terminal for all passengers was just a small room in a small hangar.

If the women were seen doing any hard physical work, 'a Lady' used to complain regularly to the Curator as she felt this should **not** be allowed. Gentle tasks outside such as planting the perennial border were acceptable. Dresses were worn for work with smocks on top which came back very stiff from the laundry. Daphne was daring enough to start wearing trousers which became the trend, but trousers were not permitted out in the grounds. Women staff numbers varied. The five who were there in 1952 dwindled down to Daphne and "ancient" Miss Raine, who was on the staff in 1931 when Llewellyn Mitchell started in the Gardens. She mostly worked in the Rose Garden dead heading and "lived" in a corner of Cuninghame House for tea breaks and lunch times. Miss Raine learned that Daphne, horror of horrors, did not like roses (except the lovely species and old-world roses) and did her best to make a conversion. She did not believe that anyone could put her favorites in the same group as most Camellias and Rhododendrons, which seemed like plastic flowers!

Each day the staff in turn, would collect water in a four-gallon tin for their tea, from a spring

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accessed through a gap in the Laurel hedge by the Kiosk pond. This spring overflowed into the pond. Daphne wonders if the Laurel hedge has since been replanted. Shags were occasionally seen near the ponds. A big enamel teapot of tea was made in the 'indoor room' and taken over to the 'outdoor' staff room. Indoor and outdoor staff had their tea breaks and lunch separately. Lunch was often on the riverbank under the walnuts.

Daphne remembers the children's playground with the old earth-bottomed pool. A fence enclosed the weather Station buildings where an Indian girl took the weather readings.

In 1952 the second dawn redwood was planted in the Gardens, opposite the Paulownia lawn near the Herbert Memorial.

The ponds seemed more natural in Daphne's time and the bridge in the bog garden was flat. The current humped stone bridge was built in 1979. Around the large macrocarpa there was a wooden seat where you could sit to look across the pond. The development of the Pinetum was part of the Centenary celebrations in the Gardens and a special ceremony was held when a new group of pines was planted. Near the New Zealand endangered species beds, (new since the 1950s) along the river path, Daphne pointed out a specimen of *Coprosma* 'Walter Brockie'. This was named for a former staff member. Part of the Hebe garden was redone in Daphne's time. The *Kowhai tetraptera* 'Gnome' planted by Walter Brockie, near the entrance to the Cockayne Garden, has grown more than expected. Crocuses are still growing under the *Pinus pinaster* opposite the Cherry mound.

Hydrangeas from the Maple, Helleborus, and Hydrangea area were cut, bundled and hung up to dry in the "Mutuals" room. When the Queen and Prince Philip came on 20 January 1954, freshly cut Hydrangea heads were made into long floral ropes used as barriers surrounding the marquee on the Archery lawn. Some staff hid in the azaleas near the river then "ducked" along the back of the Herbaceous border and climbed into the cherry trees opposite the Marquee to watch the Royal Garden Party. Daphne remembers wearing a pink dress.

Sometimes in the lunch break staff would hire boats for a river trip. The hospital was not so visible then. When a large eucalypt on the

riverbank (planted 1867), was cut down, the trunk base was useful for sitting on. Huia Gilpin had the palms that lined the path to the Curator's House removed. The palm 'netting' was used to line the hanging baskets.

The Peacock Fountain was no longer on the Archery Lawn and parts of it were stored in the tractor shed. The Irish yew opposite the Art Gallery used to have branches that reached the ground, but it was badly damaged at least twice, in snowfalls. Careful pruning means it is still flourishing. Clematis grew where the herb garden is now planted. Camellias were planted through the border (opposite the present herb garden), where penstemons and dahlias were also growing. This area had been the original Native garden and is now gradually being redeveloped with cultivars of New Zealand Natives.

There was an old corrugated iron shed in the yard and 'facilities' rather primitive. The potting shed was quite small then and had an earth floor, which was eventually concreted. Wooden duckboards were used. Cyanide and nicotine sprays were used a lot. The soil mixes were made out in the open. A fertilizer shed held potting mix ingredients with special recipes for different plant requirements. Stacks of turf were built to rot down for soil mixes. Hops were used to line the trays used for pricking out. Broken clay pots (crops) were used under the teased dried willow root in the bottom of clay or concrete pots.

The staff of the glasshouse area (as they probably do today) spent a term in the different houses learning the practical side of plant requirements. They were expected to study books and gather as much information as possible on plants under their care. Daphne started after a while in the cactus house, learning seasonal watering requirements, growth patterns and painfully of the effects of different types of prickles. A spell in the temperate plant houses, (where the main displays for Townend House were grown) taught that Calceolarias, Cinerarias and Cyclamen can collapse overnight in spite of tender loving care. Bedding plants grown from seed or cuttings (e.g. Geranium and Heliotrope), were housed in the outside frames when ready. The Orchid house was a double house and work there was a fascinating experience, in spite of having decided to have nothing to do with the family because flowers in florist shops looked artificial (*Cattleyas*), or ugly, (*Paphiopedlums*). Daphne discovered the amazing

range of forms, colours, shapes, sizes, scents and requirements of orchids and that New Zealand has orchids with a wide range of flower forms within only a few genera.

The responsibility of the seed house was rather frightening, learning density of sowing, depth and knowing that the bedding displays depended on success, (no damping off). Tiny begonia seeds were not covered. Seeds from overseas could not be re-ordered if there was a failure. Humidity had to be carefully controlled. There were also seeds that were put in pots or trays covered with shingle and placed outside, because they would only germinate in cold shady conditions.

Seed collecting from natives and some exotics, was a regular task. The plants were monitored carefully so the seeds could be collected at the best stage. About once a week on either a Saturday or Sunday, if time was not available during working hours, Daphne would go to the Gardens to check on plants she knew had ripening seed, so this could be gathered as early as possible during the week, to beat the birds or before they were lost in the soil. Seeds were then cleaned, listed and stored in round elastoplast tins for the seed exchange. This was a great way to learn how to recognize plants by their seeds and also by their cotyledons and first leaves from the seed sowing. The smell of drying Ginkgo seeds was most unpleasant, very invasive and could be smelt for some distance away.

Daphne left the Gardens in 1956 to go to work with John Taylor in his nursery until 1964. In 1986 she became a volunteer at the Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research Herbarium at Lincoln. Daphne works there one day each week and also at least one day a week as a volunteer at Travis Wetland Wildlife Reserve and, keeps an eye on what is going on in the Botanic Gardens. Many thanks Daphne for sharing your memories. Adrienne Moore.

The Millennium Seed Bank

Under the manicured lawns of Wakehurst Place (Kew in the country), lie bombproof vaults of enormous capacity waiting to be filled with seeds. The Royal Botanic Garden, Kew, administers the Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place, Sussex, England, where a research facility has

existed since the 1970s.

In sealed glass jars stored at below 20 degrees Celsius, is the beginning of a conservation project to collect seeds from all regions of the world. Already 97% of native British flora has been collected; the other 3% have not been collected owing to reasons relating to their suitability for storage, lack of seed produced, rarity or species not yet having been located. As at 4 July 2003, the bank holds 6,655 species from 15,613 collections, which is about 2.8% of the world's flora. The aim is to have 10% of the world flora collected by 2010 and 20% by 2020. Every ten years the seed is to be tested for viability, growing plants to maturity for replacement seed if necessary, although many of the collected seeds are expected to last for tens of decades. Some seeds, those that cannot be dried, i.e. desiccation intolerant or recalcitrant (difficult) seeds, need further research as to why they are different and ultimately a method of preservation may be discovered for seeds that at present cannot be stored.

There are a number of responsibilities undertaken by the curatorial staff apart from the cleaning and storing of the seeds. Seeds may need to be X-rayed for analysis and germination monitored for longevity and viability. After names have been identified tentatively in the field with pressed specimens for help in identification, a set is kept by the local group, and another sent to the seed bank which, after freezing for control of insect pests, is sent to the Kew Herbarium (which holds seven million samples) for final identification and collation into the database of the seed bank. The curators also record the data from the fieldwork and laboratory and assist with training needs both local and worldwide.

Seeds collected have a number of criteria they must satisfy. They must be collected legally with appropriate permissions and if from outside the United Kingdom must be imported with all legalities satisfied. They must also have wild provenance, be of reasonable quantity and recently harvested. They must, of course, be well documented as to date, collector, and location.

The Seed bank has been concerned initially with arid and semi arid areas because 20% of the world's population live there and are dependent upon and at the same time threaten the plants that are found in these regions. These plants are easy to collect and store as they are produced seasonally and mainly easily accessible, unlike

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those in rainforest canopies which, because of their nature, may be more difficult to collect, dry and store.

Because international legislation covers endangered species and quarantine restrictions cover many countries with national legislations also regulating the collection and export of seed it is not possible for anyone to collect seed without the protocols being observed. The Millennium Seed Bank project, supported by experienced collectors, scientists and conservationists is therefore vital to save world plant species.

Further information from www.kew.org.

Reference: Gardens Illustrated January 2000/2001
Sandy Bain

The tree of Heaven *Ailanthus altissima*

The generic name *Ailanthus* comes from Ailanto – the native name of the Indonesian tree *Ailanthus moluccana* and signifies a tree tall enough to reach the skies. The specific name *altissima* means very tall.

Of the ten or so species of *Ailanthus*, the only one commonly grown in New Zealand is *Ailanthus altissima* the "Tree of Heaven". This species is native to North China and was first introduced to European countries by the French missionary Pierre d'Incarville in 1751.

Ailanthus belongs to the little known family Simaroubaceae found throughout the tropics and sub-tropics.

The Tree of Heaven is a very handsome deciduous tree notable for its smooth grayish trunk, wide spreading open crown and huge pinnate leaves. These leaves which may be up to 60cm long, consist of 11-25 narrow, pointed leaflets – each with one or more swellings or glands at their base. The leaves are unique in that the leaflets fall off from the rachis (midrib) individually, rather than the whole leaf dropping off as a single unit. In frosty climates, the leaves turn a yellow autumn colour before dropping.

The small, insignificant looking greenish yellow flowers are borne in long panicles at the end of the

branches. The sexes are separate and the male and female flowers are usually found on separate trees – rarely on the same tree. The female tree is generally preferred, as the male flowers exude an unpleasant odour - and also because the female flowers produce large bunches of propeller like winged fruits or keys. These fruits in late summer and autumn turn an attractive orange red colour. The fruits closely resemble those of the common ash and rotate as they drop from the tree aiding their dispersal by wind.

The Tree of Heaven has been widely planted for ornament shade and soil conservation in the USA and Southern and central Europe. In New Zealand the tree has been much cultivated as an amenity tree in parks, large gardens, along rivers (Avon and Heathcote) and as wind breaks.

It grows vigorously - especially when young and ultimately may reach a height of 25 metres or so. It is also a most adaptable tree and grows where almost nothing else will grow. It even tolerates the atmospheric pollution of industrial and urban areas. Therefore a super tree, but for one bad habit. It has the tendency of suckering badly from its wide spreading roots – especially in light soils. In urban areas it will sprout amidst rubbish – and from cracks in the pavement – so that it is often dismissed as an urban weed. It often forms thickets or bushes many metres away from the parent tree.

In downtown New York this tree flourishes cropping up in crevices between paving blocks, apparently unaffected by soot and smog. The tree was made famous by the book "A tree grows in Brooklyn."

The tree has become naturalized in many countries including parts of New Zealand and was declared a noxious weed in Victoria (Australia) where it may not be grown anymore.

From Brian Appleton I have the 'true' story that some years ago an American Methodist Minister, on visiting Christchurch Botanic Gardens had a branch of the tree fall on his head - and although not seriously injured - had taken this as a sure sign from heaven to mend his ways.

An old specimen of the Tree of Heaven can be seen on the Armstrong lawn – near the Moorhouse Statue in the Botanic Gardens.

Max Visch.

**A Plant Collector: Archibald Menzies
1754-1842**

Archibald Menzies was born in Scotland, worked at the Edinburgh Botanic Gardens, qualified in medicine and botany at Edinburgh University, and joined the British Royal Navy as a surgeon/naturalist.

After voyages to the West Indies and the East Coast of North America his ability as a plant collector was noticed by Sir Joseph Banks who was then unofficial Director at Kew. Banks arranged for him to join an expedition to the Northwest coast of America led by Captain Vancouver. The aim of the expedition was to chart the coast and to discover that elusive northerly passage for the English to reach the Spice Islands.

The expedition set out with 2 small ships, the 'Discovery' and the 'Chatham', in 1791 and did not return to England till 1795, a journey of nearly 5 years.

Imagine the difficulties of collecting living plant material and seed on such a long journey! Banks provided Menzies with a plant hutch that sat on the deck of the 'Discovery', much to Captain Vancouver's displeasure. It was 13ft long, 6ft wide; the base was like a coffin, the sides of glass alternating with wooden shutters and the top, a wood grating. Inside was a bench holding clay pots, with room for a person to stand and tend the plants. Not an ideal environment to protect plants from salt spray, tropical sun, freezing temperatures and waves washing over the ships deck.

As the purpose of the voyage was charting, Menzies could only venture ashore when the ship sheltered to collect provisions, water and make repairs. Another of Menzies' duties was to identify and collect varieties of spruce and hemlock suitable for brewing "spruce beer", a concoction liberally laced with rum and molasses which added sufficient ascorbic acid to the sailors' diet to prevent scurvy. To his credit not one sailor on the voyage suffered from the dreaded disease.

The occurrence of the species name "menziesii" marks the path of that voyage; *Banksia menziesii* from South Australia; *Nothofagus menziesii*, our New Zealand silver beech, from Dusky Sound;

Dicksonia menziesii from Hawaii; *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, the Douglas fir from British Columbia, and *Arbutus menziesii* from Washington State. While on the Northwest coast of North America, Menzies is credited with collecting over 250 new plant species in just 4 months.

But on the voyage home disaster struck for Menzies. Captain Vancouver decided to withdraw the services of the rating who had been helping tend the plant hutch. When Menzies protested Captain Vancouver angrily confined him to his cabin and as the little ship battled its way round Cape Horn and up the Atlantic Ocean, the uncovered hatch filled with sea water like a bath and all the living plants died. Menzies was left only with his collection of dried herbarium specimens. This emphasizes the difficulty of introducing new plants for cultivation in the 18th century.

Unfortunately, the disagreement continued on arrival in England. Banks took over the herbarium specimens, but Vancouver claimed Menzies diaries. It was over 30 years before the herbarium specimens at Kew were studied and accurately classified under the direction of the curator Sir William Hooker, and Menzies name honoured with a genus of plants, *Menziesia*, in the family Ericaceae, commonly called the false azaleas, shrubs with insignificant flowers which consequently have never achieved recognition as commercial garden plants.

Disasters and disappointments aside, Archibald Menzies will always be remembered for discovering one particular tree, *Araucaria araucana*. It happened like this. While anchored at Valparaiso the ship's officers were invited to a banquet by the Spanish Viceroy. A bowl of nuts were offered for dessert and Menzies slipped a handful into his pocket. These were the seed of the Monkey Puzzle tree. Three seeds germinated and one was planted at Kew where it lived for nearly 100 years. The Monkey Puzzle became the fashionable tree to have in Victorian front gardens.

Jen Fisher. Member of Friends' Guiding group.

Note: To see a superb young specimen of a Monkey Puzzle, visit the Pinetum in the Botanic Gardens, (alongside the Avon River and Tennis Court carpark, off Riccarton Avenue). This tree clearly shows why the tree would be a puzzle for monkeys to climb. (Botanists did train monkeys to collect fruit etc. from trees). There is a beautifully shaped teenage Monkey puzzle tree in the

Snippets

1950s Botanic Gardens' Staff Reunion

Last month 36 old staffers from the 1950s gathered at the Gardens to reminisce about the 'good old days'. It started off on the Friday night with a cocktail party in the Hurst Seagar room in the Arts Centre when the old photos came out along with the memories.

Saturday began with morning tea at the old Tea Kiosk, generously hosted by Cr Carole Anderton on behalf of the City Council. Dr David Given and Jeremy Hawker were there to bring us up to date with current and future plans for the Gardens and to guide us around the facilities.

We checked out the propagating glasshouses all renewed since 'our time' – the office/library/mess room building was built while we were there. There was great interest in checking out the bunker where every male apprentice served the first part of every day for his first year clearing the clinkers from the fire box and shovelling the coal hopper full. Weekends you got to do the Cuningham House boiler as well.

We liked the more natural jungle area in Cuningham and the displays in Townend. We marvelled at how well Gordon Gee's desert scene mural has withstood the test of time in the bright light and heat of the cactus house. We well remembered the dramas involved in its painting. Then it was a leisurely stroll to 'Gilpies' House now the Curators' House Restaurant for a memorable lunch and some more yarn swapping. We used to have our 'Mutuals' there in the Gilpin's front room where the great Maurice Barnett used to inspire and terrify us from his fireside chair. Those sessions were great learning experiences and for most it was their first 'public' speaking occasion even if it was to just a group of workmates.

We all agreed that the Botanics was a great place to learn and we rated ourselves very fortunate to be there when Lawrie Metcalf was our boss and teacher. His encyclopedic plant knowledge and his dedication to accuracy in labeling was an inspiration to us all. And those seed collecting trips to the Southern Alps inspired a fascination for both our alpine flora and our wonderful mountains.

We'll be back for the next Botanics' bash2013 we understand.

Alan Morgan.

The Friends' Submission to CCC about the Draft Community Plan 2004-2014

On behalf of the Friends, Cameron Moore has prepared our submission to the Christchurch City Council about their Community Plan for the future. Cam consulted with key people in the Botanic Gardens and briefed our May committee meeting on the content of the submission. Committee members signed the submission indicating their support for it. Of course, other private individuals and other organisations will be making submissions and many of those may address similar concerns and comments to our own.

We congratulated the Council on indicating a budget of some additional \$10 million for the Gardens and we raised other, more detailed concerns. Our independence from the City Council allowed us to speak for the people of Christchurch and to be supportive of the Botanic Gardens' staff. The Committee expressed their thanks to Cam for the extensive work he has done on our behalf. He has requested an opportunity to speak to our submission in June. If you would like a copy of our submission it can be made available to you by phoning Faye Fleming (3517798).

From our History File

To record memories of former Botanic Gardens' staff, I have walked the same general route in the Gardens to hear their stories. In previous issues we have published stories from Llewellyn Mitchell from the 1930s, John Taylor from the 1940s, Max Visch from the 1950/60s and now we hear from Daphne Banks nee McVicker. (See pages 5 - 7)

We hope to hear from many more former staff and anyone willing to join the project, please contact me on Ph. 3515 915 or email hazelbrook@xtra.co.nz Adrienne.

Membership

We value the contribution of three of our members who have recently died.

Runa Williams attended our events regularly, when she lived in town and was generous in her contributions to our fundraising.

Ron Proctor was a member of the establishment committee of the Friends and served on the committee for some years, generously sharing his wisdom gained through his many garden related activities and as a former President of the Horticultural Society.

Peter Mahan served many years on our committee and was a member of the early propagating team, an Information Centre helper and newsletter editor and contributor. He had wide interests and knowledge of the Natural Sciences and was a very able guide.

From Steve Whysall Garden writer in the Vancouver Sun

"My garden has shown me that beauty still has immense value, even if it lasts but a day, and even if it is delicate and intricate and merely the size of a fingernail...that appearances are deceptive and that even if something looks dead in the dark of winter, there is still life stirring somewhere, out of my sight.

Of all the things you can do in life, I believe making (and falling in love with) a garden has got to rank as one of the most satisfying and worthwhile."

Job Vacancies

TREASURER

It is with regret that I tender my resignation as Treasurer of the Friends of the Gardens as from the Annual Meeting in August this year.

I have had pleasure in managing the finances of the Friends, monies which so many work to produce, mainly in the form of Plant Sales from the Propagating Team. I feel certain that there is among the membership, somebody who has retired from accountancy or business who could manage this position very ably.

Please give this your consideration and ring me on 9424989 for more information regarding the position.

Alison Fox

ASSITANT EDITOR

Please contact Adrienne, 3515915 if you are interested in helping with our newsletter.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Please contact Faye, 3517798 if you would like to be nominated for the Committee.



Gardens of the World from Jim Crook

For those members who have access to the Internet here is a sample of the many sites which are worth visiting. These are:

- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew -
- Chateau Versailles, France -
- Monet's Garden, Governed, France -
- Hawaii Tropical Botanical Garden -
- The Boboli Gardens, Florence, Italy -
- Hamilton Gardens, NZ -

- www.rbgkew.org.uk
- www.chateauversailles.fr
- www.fno.org/exhibits/MGarden/garden.html
- www.htbg.com
- www.enrico2.firenze.net/boboli.html
- www.hamiltongardens.co.nz

12 FRIENDS OF THE CHRISTCHURCH BOTANIC GARDEN

Contact Numbers

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------|------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| President & Daily Guided | | | Education Subcommittee | | |
| Walks Co-ordinator | Faye Fleming | 351-7798 | Co-ordinator | Lynne Rowe | 358-8412 |
| Vice President | | | Ex Officio | David Given | 941-7583 |
| Immediate Past President | Dennis Preston | 351-4131 | | Jeremy Hawker | 941-7580 |
| Treasurer | Alison Fox | 942-4989 | Helpers | | |
| Membership Secretary | Ruby Coleman | 355-8811 | Plant Sale | Helen Constable | 980-9358 |
| Minutes Secretary | Jim Crook | 358-5845 | Newsletter mail out | Sally Jebson | 352-6363 |
| Committee Members | Janet Begg | 385-5114 | Botanist | Bill Sykes | 366-3844 |
| | Matt Morris | 354 2977 | Walks | Max Visch | 338-2273 |
| Outings/trips | Alison Fox | 942-4989 | Enquiries | Information Centre | 941-7591 |
| Newsletter/Programme | Adrienne Moore | 351-5915 | Computer | Sylvia Meek & Fay Jackson | |
| Projects Planner | David Moyle | 358-8914 | Newsletter layout | Maria Adamski | |

Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Inc
PO Box 2553
Christchurch
New Zealand

Friends of Christchurch Botanic Gardens Inc.

Insert to Newsletter no. 59 May 2004

Friends' Phone Contacts:
Programme Adrienne Moore 351 5915

President Faye Fleming 351 7798
Membership Ruby Coleman 355 8811

Coming Events

A small charge is made at some meetings/events to cover expenses – as indicated.
Daily guided walks resume in September and will all depart from the Museum entrance to the Gardens. Bookings for tours are available all the year by special request. Ph. 351 7798.
The Guiding group meets in the morning of the first Monday each month. Details 351 7798
All Friends' guided walks leave from the BG Information Centre unless otherwise noted.

Wed 19 May 7.30pm The Traditional uses of New Zealand Plants with Dr Murray Parsons.
At Canterbury Horticultural Society, 57 Riccarton Ave. \$3. Supper.

Dr Murray Parsons grew up in Martinborough, Wairarapa, and studied botany and zoology at Victoria University of Wellington, then phycology, or seaweed studies, at University of Adelaide, South Australia. From 1971 he was marine phycologist with Botany Division of DSIR at Lincoln and later was Keeper of CHR Herbarium, until he left Landcare Research in 1999. Of both Pakeha and Maori decent, he has been involved in various government committees to further Maori participation in science since 1990. He is now consults on phycological, ethnobotanical and bicultural issues.

Sat 22 May 2.00pm Guided Walk - The Life of a Tree, with Max Visch. \$2

Tue 25 May 10.15am Guided Walk -Tour of the Conservatories with BG Staff Member Greg Salton

Fri 4 Jun 12.30pm-1.30pm 'Soup plus lunch' in Petanque rooms with BG Staff. Cost \$4
1.30pm walk to near Herbaceous border for tree planting by pupils of local school to celebrate Arbor day. RSVP by Fri 28 May to Janet 3855114. Late RSVP to Alison 9424989

Wed 16 Jun 7.30pm Talk Alice Miller Doctoral student in Plant Ecology at Lincoln University on – Conserving two New Zealand threatened cresses: battling the invaders.
at Canterbury Horticultural Society, 57 Riccarton Ave \$3. Supper

Sat 19 Jun 2.00pm Guided Walk - Bark, Burrs and Bumps with Max Visch \$2

Tue 22 Jun 10.15am Guided Walk - Leonard Cockayne Garden with BG Staff Member Mark Davis

Sat 10 July 2.00pm Guided Walk – Plants used to make Paper, with Friends' Guide \$2. NB this walk a week earlier than usual.

Sun 18 Jul 2.00pm Illustrated Talk "Our Iconic Cabbage Tree" With Dr Philip Simpson
At Canterbury Horticultural Society, 57 Riccarton Ave \$3. Afternoon tea.
"Dr Philip Simpson has spent many years studying the tree lilies of the world, including New Zealand's cabbage tree, America's joshua tree, and Australia's grass tree. His book on the cabbage tree "Dancing Leaves" won the Montana Book award for Environment in 2001. In this illustrated talk he will describe how the cabbage tree evolved and is adapted to New Zealand ecology, the ways in which people have valued the tree, and what is needed to ensure its survival."

- Tue 27 Jul 10.15am Guided Walk - Rose Garden with BG Staff member Bede Nottingham.
- Sun 8 Aug 2.00pm AGM followed by Dr David Given, Curator/Botanical Services Manager, on "More than a Garden – Heading towards 2013" at Canterbury Horticultural Soc. 57 Riccarton Ave, followed by afternoon tea.
- Sat 21 Aug 2.00pm Guided Walk - Plants from Japan with Max Visch. \$2
- Tue 24 Aug 10.15am Guided Walk -Then and Now, a Garden History with BG Staff member, Sue Molloy.
- Sat 11 Sep Sale of Bulbs and early plants. 10.00am-1.00pm Near BG Information Centre.
- Sat 18 Sep 2.00pm Guided Walk with Friends' Guide - Highlights of Spring. \$2
- Sun 26 Sep 2.00pm Talk/demonstration "Seed collecting, the practical, the political, & the philosophical" With Dr Ena Paterson and Rev Hugh Paterson.
Dr Ena and Rev Hugh met when studying Botany and for 21 years ran Southern Seeds, collecting and exporting mostly alpine seeds on behalf of the Parish of Malvern. Canterbury Horticultural Society, 57 Riccarton Ave. Afternoon tea. \$3
- Tue 28 Sep 10.15am Guided Walk - Alpine House with BG Staff member, Malcolm Shirlaw
- Full details of following events in next newsletter.
- Sat 9 Oct Bus trip to Ashburton Area. Visiting Alouette garden and nursery plus....Cost and times to come. Phone Alison Fox 9424989
- Sat 16 Oct 2.00pm Guided Walk with Max Visch \$2 Mona Vale
- Sat 23 Oct BG Plant Sale - details later.
- Tue 26 Oct 10.15am Guided Walk – Water Garden, with BG Staff member, Dean Pendrigh
- Wed 17 Nov 7.30pm Bill Whitmore, former Commissioner on Plant Variety Rights in New Zealand, will speak on - Plant Variety Rights – Inspired by the 'Peace' rose and now protecting plant breeders' rights.
Canterbury Horticultural Society. 57 Riccarton Ave, \$3 followed by supper.
- Sat 20 Nov 2.00pm Guided Walk with Friends' Guide \$2 Roses.
- Sat 20 Nov Bus trip to Akaroa including Garden of Tane with Dr Warwick Harris, the first President of the Friends.
To register your interest, please phone Alison Fox on 9424989.
- Tue 23 Nov 10.15am Guided Walk – Woodland Trees with BG Staff member Richard Poole
- Sat 4 Dec Members' Christmas Party - details later
- Sat 18 Dec 2.00pm Guided Walk with Friends' Guide from BG Information Centre \$2
No 4th Tue Staff led walk. 28 December.

Everyone is welcome to our events. Bring your family and friends.