



Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens

Veronica lavaudiana Sun Hebe Endemic to Banks Peninsula Christchurch

NEWSLETTER No 137 SPRING 2024

As I am writing this, it has been the most wonderful Spring in Christchurch and especially in the Botanic Gardens. The daffodils were late but the cherry blossoms were several weeks early, resulting in a marvellous display, coinciding with various magnolias as well. Every visit to the Gardens brought a new discovery. Crowds flocked to Hagley Park and the Gardens every weekend to enjoy the spectacle.

In mid-September we had the added bonus of "Illuminate", a spectacular lighting festival designed to show the Gardens in a new and vibrant light. Thousands of visitors thronged the Gardens every night, awed by the ever-changing hues and the dancing laser lights reflected in the water.



Laser Display in the Water Garden



Illuminated Trees

Many Friends will be delighted to note that the Peace Bell has undergone restoration work and the bell is now much more secure.

Following the AGM in August, Margaret Metherell was elected President of the Friends and it is my pleasure to welcome her first President's Report to this Newsletter.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This is my first report to you as the newly appointed President so I will start by introducing myself.

I grew up on a farm in North Canterbury, in a family of gardeners. My parents had a lovely country garden which grew over the years, with tree planting in the adjacent paddocks and several (removes/shifts) of the fence line. Many of the plants were known by the name of the gardener from whom they came, and seldom did a visitor for Sunday lunch go away without a (newspaper-wrapped) parcel of plants. Recently, neglect resulted in the loss of my mother's favourite pelargonium "Mrs. Willocks" but I was able to recover her from a family friend who had it in her garden. I left the farm for high school in Christchurch, qualified as a doctor and for many years gardening took second place to a busy life as a GP and stepmother of three boys, now all with families of their own. In 2015 my husband Tony and I took an (earthquake-generated) opportunity, sold our damaged Strowan home as-is, and bought an old garden and building site on Murray-Aynsley Hill. There I have had the great pleasure of rejuvenating parts of the well-established garden which had been vacant for some years following the February 2011 earthquake and creating a new garden around our newly built (energy-efficient) house. I retired from general practice in 2021 and around the same time joined the guiding team at the Botanic gardens. That proved to be a wonderful transition away from medical life with new things to learn and new people to meet. As well guiding I also volunteer in the Curator's House Garden, persuaded by our former president that it would be a pleasure to spend some time gardening on the flat! That is true, but more importantly I have learnt a lot about vegetable gardening. I walk regularly in the Gardens with a friend, which has proved a great way to keep up with what is happening there.



And what a lot has been going on. Spring may be my favourite time of year, as we transition from the late winter snowdrops to the full glory of the daffodil lawns, then the more fleeting pleasure of the cherry blossom, soon followed by the flowering of the magnolias. The rockery area is also an ever-changing delight. The weather has presented its challenges, with unseasonably warm weather followed by the most recent bitterly cold southwesterly flows and some very welcome rain. These fronts presented challenges for the immensely popular Illuminate show which saw the Gardens open at night with entertainment for all ages in the interactive displays, laser light shows, and uplighting which so beautifully lit up some of the garden's trees. As a result of the weather-related cancellations the show has been extended into a third weekend.

The Friends of the Gardens committee has been delighted to see good progress on some of our projects. Those of you who have been to Mona Vale recently will have seen that work has started on the earthquake repairs of the Bathhouse. It has been most interesting to be able to see the extent of the damage as the foundations were exposed to view. The energetic promotion of this project, fundraising, and contribution to the scoping of repairs has prevented the project from languishing on the Council's "to-do" list.

We have recently decided to explore the use of a microphone system for our guided walks. This will be especially of assistance with larger groups but may be available on our Daily Walks, so if you have a hearing disability it would be worth asking. Look out for the Heritage Week walks which replace the usual Daily Walks. These will have a special focus on the history of the Botanic Gardens. The Plant Stall is open again after the winter recess and I for one can often be seen with a new "treasure" to take home to my own garden. Monthly talks are back to the summer schedule of 4pm on Sunday. We hope to continue to make Petanque Court parking available for these.

A major activity just starting in the Gardens is preparation for renovation of the Cunningham Conservatory. Currently work is underway on the adjacent Townend house, which will then house some of the plants removed from Cunningham House while the major work is underway. As well you will see some new paths and bedding areas as you walk around the Gardens.

As you all know, parking at the Gardens will soon attract a fee. I do hope that this will not impact too much on your ability to visit, and enjoy, our beautiful gardens.

Margaret Metherell

President of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens



- P1. Editorial
- P2. President's Report
- P3. Director's Report
- P4. Mona Vale Update
- P5. Tribute to Diana Madgin
- P6. Introducing Shizuka Cornelius
- P7. Upcoming Events
- P7. Willow Springs visit
- P8..Daintree Visit – Ray McTeigue
- P9. Plant Hunters' Story
- P10.Book Review -Jane Cowan-Harris
- P11. Friends' Contacts



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Work is progressing on additional paths in the Australian border where we are going to add a number of new taxa, many from the Eastern part of the continent. It will be a great place to get inspiration for dry tolerant plants for the garden at home. Opposite we are planting more ground cover to have an even better invitation to the Central Rose Garden.

Near the Visitor Centre entrance to the Central Rose Garden you will see two new beds being created. We will plant some *Stewartia* there, which is a small genus of medium sized trees and shrubs native to Asia. I love the white flowers, outstanding autumn colour and patterned bark of the trees. The trees will be underplanted with shrub forming 'tree paeonias' as well the intermediate hybrid between the woody and herbaceous *Paeonia*.

Cunningham House work is soon due to start. We are just strengthening Townend house and then part of the Cunningham plant collection will move into this space. Other plants will go into nursery houses. With us not showing the colourful displays in Townsend while we work on Cunningham House, we will have more space as we won't be growing the next seasons' crops.

The Alpine Yard beside Cunningham House has been moved to another nursery location.

The trainees will be going to Dunedin for 3 days to visit the Botanic Gardens and some other collections. This is made possible with the help of all of you as Friends of the Gardens, thank you.

Wolfgang Bopp

Director, Christchurch Botanic Gardens



MONA VALE UPDATE

The Bathhouse repairs are on schedule and within budget which is very satisfying. The contractors are working on the floor and tiles at present (until these are taken up it is not clear if they can be reused). The work is scheduled to be finished by January/February 2025.

Currently the FOCBG are on the lookout for a suitable water feature to be installed in the Bathhouse on completion of repairs.

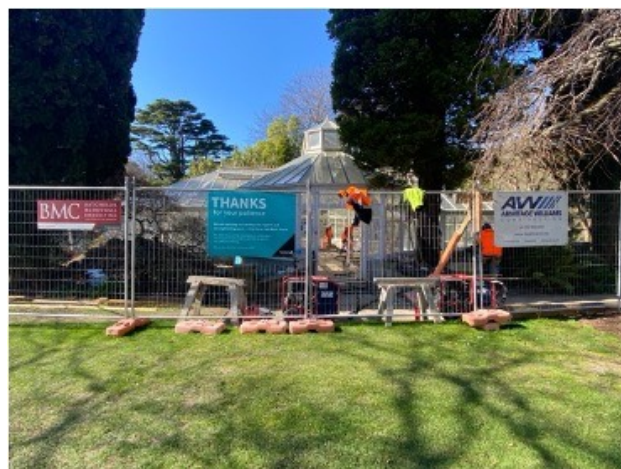
The QR codes for donations, which the Friends sourced, have been installed at the entrance to the rose garden and at the entrance/exit to the external car park. They have not been concreted in so they



can be moved if another site seems more suitable. Butterflies' and a *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* (Dawn Redwood). See if you can spot them on your next visit.

Mona Vale is a lovely garden to work in. If any of you can find time to volunteer, Rachel Woods (clemmie96@gmail.com), would be very happy to put you in touch with the staff at Mona Vale.

Jeanette Christensen



Your committee is currently sponsoring two sets of bike stands which should be installed within the next month.

Ben and Brian, (Gardeners at Mona Vale) and their helpers are very busy maintaining and replenishing the different gardens. Changes have been made to the area around the Summer House in the Heritage Rose Garden. Perennials have been planted for this season until new Heritage Roses can be purchased next year. They have also extended the yellow and blue garden to the right of the first bridge on the main drive.

Structural work is finished with recobbled paths and asphalt re-laid on the main access route near the first bridge. The water main from Mona Vale will be shifted over the next few months; currently it goes into Girls High grounds where they are putting up a new building.

Nicky Brown (Deputy Director of the Botanic Gardens and Mona Vale) has had a selection of new trees planted. These include Mulberry trees, a River Birch (*Betula nigra*), which has very attractive bark, a *Ginkgo bilboa* 'Jade



TRIBUTE TO DIANA MAGDIN

Diana Madgin was one of the first to lead guided tours of the Botanic Gardens. She did this in a private capacity in her role as a guide with a tourist company. When Faye and Neil Fleming introduced a volunteer guiding programme into the Botanic Gardens over 20 years ago Diana was one of the first recruits in their inaugural training programme.

She brought many skills to the task. She inherited a love and knowledge of plants and flowers from her mother growing up on a farm in Southland; she was especially fond of border plants which were always a feature on display in her River Road home in Christchurch in years to come. This home was destroyed in the earthquakes which saw Diana and husband Bill move to a new house in the Heathcote Valley where another garden was quickly established.

Bill was a Professor of Sociology at Canterbury University and together Diana and Bill started taking guided tours to China, the country of his birth, in 1989. Diana contributed to the tours by organising garden visits to specific places of interest and so developed a special interest in plants from China. They were both very involved in the New Zealand-China Friendship Society, which Diana continued after Bill's death in 2021.

From the early days of Guiding and up to the Covid season, Diana was very actively involved in leading regular walks in the Botanic Gardens. Diana was a fountain of knowledge and a skilled communicator with a natural warmth and interest in people. She was expressive and articulate in her conversations, but equally expressive with the written word: she wrote regular pieces for the Christchurch Press, the NZ Gardener and the Friends newsletters. She was a great encourager of new guides: one guide described her as 'formidable' in the best sense of the word, and a 'rock of knowledge' for new recruits. She loved the stories of the great plant hunters and was instrumental in getting this established as a regular Guided Walk.

Her natural warmth was endearing. In recent years she faced many challenges, but always managed to keep going in her inimitable loving manner. She never wanted to give up guiding and even towards the end of her days she talked about picking it up again. She will be missed.

Susan Lawrence - Guides Co-ordinator

Note Cards for Sale:

The Friends have produced two high quality note cards which would be very handy to use for thank you notes or to accompany gifts. Prices are very reasonable and you might like to keep a number handy:

1 Card	\$3.00
4 Cards	\$10.00
10 Cards	\$24.00





INTRODUCING SHIZUKA CORNELIUS - Vicki Steven

Shizuka Cornelius is a very familiar sight to all of us who enjoy the Central Rose Garden, but how well do we know her?

Shizuka comes from a small town in Iwate Prefecture in northern Honshu, Japan, noted for being the home of a famous baseball player, Shohei Otani. Her mother is a keen gardener but in their town most plants have to be dug up and brought inside during the cold winters.

She came to Christchurch in 2003 and volunteered with Bede Nottingham, one of the section Curators at the Botanic Gardens. Whilst working in the CBG, she met her Kiwi husband and in 2007 was offered an apprenticeship. On completion of her training there were no positions available to the CBG so she went to work for City Care. Unfortunately, after taking maternity leave, Shizuka was unable to obtain family-friendly hours at City Care so became a stay-at-home mum until offered a casual position in the Alpine House. She particularly enjoyed staging the displays weekly. In 2020 the curator's position became available in the Rose Garden and HR was supportive of her working part-time. The rest, as they say, is history ...

Shizuka's favourite rose is Aotearoa, a Sam McGredy hybrid tea. Although she is "not really a pink person", this is a pink rose, with nice perfume and repeat flowering.



She manages the Rose Garden with help from a trainee every second week (shared with Heidi). The trainees work on a 2 month rotation to broaden their experience. An important feature of the Rose Garden management is that no chemical sprays are used. Instead sucking pests such as aphids are controlled by organic oils usually sold as "Spraying Oil". Shizuka advises reading the small print on the label carefully with regard to its effect on bees. Support staff, Lance & Elena, help with the pruning of the big yew hedges but Shizuka does the topiary balls in the middle of the garden by herself. In winter, the complete rose pruning takes 3 people up to a full month to complete, depending on the weather. The hardest part is untying and reshaping the climbers.

When pressed to say what her least favourite task is, Shizuka admitted to not enjoying using a weed-eater when she worked for City Care, so it seems she really enjoys caring for the Central Rose Garden. Already the roses are looking healthy and we can eagerly look forward to the flowering season soon.

Shizuka's two boys, Johnno (12) and Louie (9) enjoy playing sport so she has a very busy life.



UPCOMING EVENTS

As usual your committee has come up with some interesting speakers for the next few months:

17 November – Councillor and Mayoral contender, Sara Templeton will speak about the Climate Challenge: What Council's doing and how to get involved.

8 December – Our annual Christmas Gathering with Garden's Director, Wolfgang Bopp as guest speaker.

16 February – Laura Jones will speak about the history & importance of the Magnetic Observatory.

16 March – Chris Donaldson from Pegasus Winery will describe the process of creating a

WILLOW SPRINGS VISIT

When you arrive at Willow Springs, it is hard to believe that this was just paddocks in 2009 when Chris Boon purchased the 7 acre property. The subsequent earthquakes provided Chris with an amazing opportunity to "rescue" hundreds of abandoned Red Zone plants, many now several metres high. Chris spent many hours tracking down owners and getting their permission to move large, beloved rhododendrons, camellias, maples and other plants.



The eponymous springs were concealed under blackberry and have now been opened up to reveal crystal clear water bubbling up in large water feature lakes. The high water table didn't bode well for some of the rhododendrons but Chris has mastered the art of raising the ground level to avoid the dreaded wet feet and consequent root rot.

Chris & his partner, Andrea have developed different areas such as a succulent garden, native walk and an arbour suitable for wedding photos. Chris has many

more plans for the garden. They offer High Teas and garden tours by arrangement. The Friends enjoyed a very pleasant morning exploring Willow Springs at the peak of the rhododendron flowering season.





DAINTREE WET TROPICS VISIT - Ray McTeigue

Jill and I visited the Daintree rainforest on the North Queensland coast of Australia in August this year. Having been to Cairns and Port Douglas previously we wanted to see the extensive wet tropics area north of the Daintree River and up to Cape Tribulation.

Scientific research based on evidence of fossilized pollen dating back over 100 million years has determined that the wet tropical forests on the North Queensland coast are among the world's oldest forests and for thousands of years the homeland of many Kuku Yalanji aboriginal tribal families.

Following European early settlement some areas of the forest were cleared and subdivided, but large tracts of the rainforest persisted through vigorous and invasive regrowth - assisted by inaccessibility due to the difficult and remote access, and tremendously high rainfall of 4000mm average/yr.

Fortunately the proposal for a bridge over the Daintree River never eventuated and although a basic sealed road extends from the north bank of the river – crossed today by a 'wire-roped' car ferry – and up to Cape Tribulation, public protest and scientific endeavours ensured the protection of the Greater Daintree Region. However legacies of early 1980s poor town planning are still being addressed to this day.

Far north Queensland's Wet Tropics, including the now Daintree National Park were finally inscribed on the World Heritage register in 1984.

Daintree Discovery Centre

An excellent facility to visit to learn about the Daintree habitats is the Daintree Discovery Centre, located just a short drive north of the Daintree River ferry crossing. The area around the Daintree Discovery Centre is tropical lowland rainforest, referred to as a Mesophyll vine forest and exhibits a large average leaf size – an average leaf size in the canopy of greater than 12.5cm. Moving up the mountain slopes in the Daintree, the average leaf size decreases to an average of 7.5cm to 12.5cm halfway up the mountains. The leaf size on the mountain tops can be less than 7.5cm.

The Discovery Centre opened in 1989 and contains a representative range of lowland plant species – many labelled – with individual interpretive audio units provided that explain each unique flora and fauna feature of the rainforest. The entire Centre is traversed by boardwalks just above the ground level, with an aerial walkway and a 23m high canopy tower from which to view the extensive forest canopy.



North Queensland Fig Trees

Just a block down from the Cairns Novotel hotel there is a single fig tree species of *Ficus benjamina*. This specimen is growing outside the Cairns Library – a very early settlement building now repurposed. *Ficus benjamina* is commonly known as the Weeping Fig. Native to Australia as well as Asia it is actually the official tree of Bangkok, and naturally found in tropical forests, monsoonal forest or even mixed wet forests. In Australia, it's natural habitat includes sea level areas in Northern Queensland as well as the Atherton Tablelands – being traditionally a common outdoor ornamental plant found in parks and gardens, as well as a common indoor plant.



Observing the great size of these tropical fig trees, it is a reminder not to plant your *Ficus benjamina* pot plant into your garden – if you happen to also live in Northern Queensland of course.

Another fascinating fig tree species we visited was the *Ficus virens* specimen located in a Mabi Forest reserve just a short drive from Yungaburra, on the Atherton Tablelands.

This particular *Ficus virens* is considered the Atherton Tableland's most famous tree in this part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and is referred to as the Curtain Fig.

The Mabi Forest of this region can be described in a future article but it is interesting to compare the appearance of the Curtain Fig with the Cairns Weeping Fig.

Whereas the Cairns Weeping Fig, being a different fig species, was planted outside the Library as a seedling and grew naturally into its form today, the Mabi Curtain Fig is believed to have developed its most unusual appearance by beginning as a *Ficus virens* seed lodged within the crown of another completely unrelated tree species. The fig seedling grew and developed aerial roots which encircled and eventually strangled the original host tree. After some time it is believed that the dead host tree toppled over – assisted by the increasing weight of the growing fig tree – but its fall was arrested by it leaning over onto another neighbouring tree.



PLANT HUNTERS STORY - Vicki Steven

Davidia involucrata was first described by Father Armand David in 1869 from a single tree at high altitude in western China. Earnest Wilson went searching for it at the request of Sir Harry Veitch, only to find it had been chopped down. However he managed to find a whole grove of them in the Yangtze River Gorge. It is the only living species in its genus, but others species have been found as fossils.

The distinctive feature of *Davidia* are the large, but delicate inflorescences which consist of 2 uneven white bracts surrounding a small purplish-red flower. When the bracts blow in the wind they resemble handkerchiefs or even doves, hence the common names of handkerchief tree or dove tree. The very fine specimen of *Davidia involucrata* in the CBG is flowering now right beside the yew hedge surrounding the Central Rose Garden at the NE corner. Do go and see it soon as the flowering period is very short.



BOOK REVIEW

City Beautiful – The First 100 years of the Christchurch Beautifying Association

by Thelma Strongman. Reviewed by Jane Cowan-Harris

This is a fascinating book started in 1997 and published in 1999 about the development of the Christchurch Beautifying Association and how it shaped the development of Christchurch as we know it today. The Association was started originally by a group of men such as Samuel Hurst Seagar, who was a town planner before becoming an architect, Harry Ell, known for his development of the Summit Road walkways amongst other things and Leonard Cockayne, botanist responsible for writing one of the great books on New Zealand natives. They were aware that there was no public body to manage the appearance of the city in general. The Association formed to work together to try and create a pleasant looking city, discouraging unsightly areas such as rows of advertising billboards along roads, messy rivers used for rubbish disposal and encouraging the planting of native species where possible and practical.

Who would believe that the challenges of finding a good design for Cathedral Square are not new? There was a huge uproar when trams were introduced in the early 1900s and the “ugly tram shelter” in Cathedral Square blocked the view of the Godley Statue! The statue was eventually moved to a different part of the Square, but it was the hard work of the members of the Beautifying Association who petitioned to ensure that action was taken.

The Association gifted the floral clock in Victoria Square in 1953 and also created the centennial waterwheel on Mill Island near the Hereford St bridge in 1977. These were more obvious major contributions, but the Association was also responsible from its inception for riverbank improvements, general river maintenance, keeping of mature trees as suburbs developed, promoting attractive streets and gardens and generally working towards the name of the Garden City. They also made comments on buildings which might have been otherwise lost, potential additions to Cathedral Square, where statues of prominent people should be placed, what should be done with the Provincial Chambers and even removing ugly overhead wires which were on the skyline once electricity arrived, to be replaced by underground wires.

The focus of the Association has changed over the years, possibly as the City Council has taken over some of the areas the Association worked in during the early days, to become one of encouraging Christchurch residents and factories to take pride in their gardens, rewarded by cups in the various competitions. They have still been a voice to the Council when action has been required on preserving mature trees as development occurs and general maintenance of our city as an attractive and pleasant place to live and to visit.

Thelma Strongman was a Christchurch based active writer on gardening themes and histories for many years. This well researched book gives an excellent history of the work the committed people of the Christchurch Beautifying Association have achieved since 1897 and is well worth picking up and dipping into.

FRIENDS' CONTACT NUMBERS

Committee

President:	Margaret Metherell	027 459 3199
Secretary & Past President:	Jane Cowan-Harris	021 043 5342
Treasurer:	Carol Halstead	

Jeanette Christensen, Susan Lawrence, Ray McTeigue, Vicki Steven, Rachel Wood,

Other Contacts

Guides Co-ordinator: Susan Lawrence 021 120 6258

Group guided walks: Pat Whitman (03) 384 3475

Newsletter editor: Vicki Steven
vicki_steven2005@yahoo.com.au

Enquiries About Membership: Ray McTeigue 027 569 9402

Email: friendsofthegardens@gmail.com

Post: PO Box 73036 Orchard Road
Christchurch 8154 New Zealand

Botanic Gardens enquiries: Information Centre (03) 941 7590

Free Guided Walks

Don't forget that our free guided walks run every day from 1st October until 30th April, leaving from the Kiosk at 1:30pm.

These walks are themed to cover different sections of the Botanic Gardens such as the Central Rose Garden, Heritage Rose Garden, Native section, Palms, Pinetum etc and are a great activity for your summer visitors as well as a reminder to locals what a wonderful place the Christchurch Botanic Gardens is. Group bookings are welcome.



Canterbury Horticultural Society

NEWS & EVENTS

Have you seen the amazing planters at the Kiosk?

BALCONY DWELLERS

Sustainable Gardening for Small Spaces

With a focus on environmentally conscious practices, discover the joy of cultivating your own greens, herbs and fruit, making the most of every centimetre of your outdoor sanctuary.

Next session Saturday 19 October

Monthly, third Saturday of the Month at Ōtakaro Orchard 10am - 12pm
\$20 (\$25 Non-Members)



Edible FLOWERS



with Marion Smith from Petal & Co

Edible Flowers

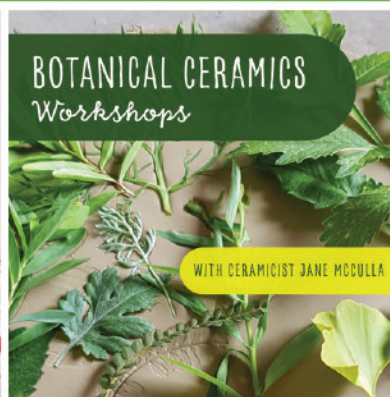
Sip floral fizz while decorating your own cake with stunning edible flowers!

Join us for an enchanting workshop with Marion Smith from Petal & Co, the Canterbury expert in growing and supplying stunning edible flowers.

Saturday 19 October 3 - 5pm
Tuesday 22 October 12.30 - 2.30pm
The Kiosk,
Christchurch Botanic Gardens
\$40 (\$60 Non-Members)



BOTANICAL CERAMICS Workshops



WITH CERAMICIST JANE MCCULLA

Botanical Ceramics

Plates & Tiles with Jane McCulla

Ceramicist Jane McCulla will demonstrate how to imprint botanical textures onto clay, hand-building techniques and how to make a botanically-inspired Green Man tile. Includes all materials, glazing and kiln firing!

Botanical Plate: 7 November 10am - 12.30pm
10 November: 1-3pm

Green Man Tile: 2 March 2025 10am - 12.30pm

The Kiosk, Botanic Gardens
\$65 (\$80 Non-Members)



Margaret Watling

Memorial Demonstration

Sunday 3 November 2pm

Kate Williams

The After Hours Stylist

Join Kate Williams, author of The After Hours Stylist and discover how to style stunning tables for any event. Leave inspired with fresh ideas for creating gorgeous festive tables using seasonal elements from your own garden.

59 Charwell Lane, Prebbleton
Book online: \$95 Members & Friends (\$120 Non-Members)



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Friends of the Gardens are eligible for all CHS Member discounts!

When you make an online booking for a course or workshop just remember to select 'CHS Member' as the rate.