



WELCOME TO OUR
Spring Newsletter



New squirrel in the Woodland

Isn't spring the most wonderful time to be in Christchurch! Every day new flowers burst open, Rhododendrons, Magnolias and of course the signature spring image of Christchurch, the Yoshino Cherries. During the winter many projects were undertaken in the Gardens, ranging from the ongoing redevelopment of the Cuningham House, the upgrade of the Friends' Nursery (P 5) and the "Illuminations" event which wowed 80,000 visitors over 3 weekends in August. Seeing the Gardens brilliantly lit up and decorated with fanciful inflated animals and gently fluttering butterflies gave a whole new perspective.

As usual your Committee has arranged a full programme of events to look forward to, starting with a fun-filled morning exploring Christine & Ivan Donaldson's beautiful garden at Pegasus Bay Winery in Waipara on 19th October; followed by a talk on Heritage Roses by Murray Radha & Fran Rawling on Sunday 16th November at 4pm in the Kiosk.

Our Christmas Get-together will be on Sunday 7th December at 4 pm in the Kiosk when Wolfgang will talk about the rebuild of Cuningham House.

-Vicki Steven, Editor

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President's Report

Spring always brings joy to the gardener's heart. I have been overseas for almost 6 weeks, first in the UK where we spent time with friends and family, and then in Spain. But I knew that I was home when the shuttle from the airport brought us along Harper Avenue, the spring blossom in its full glory, and daffodils still to be seen among the grass. Then we got home and my Macabeanum rhododendron, previously a shy flowerer, was just covered with blooms.

The trip wasn't focused on garden activities but there were still some related highlights. While in Cambridge I took up the opportunity to do a free guided walk in the Cambridge University Botanic Garden. The highly trained volunteer guiding team has a long history of scheduled walks with visiting groups, often academic, but the free walks were a summer holidays trial.



Puppy in Bilbao

The Systematic Beds are a particular feature of the Gardens, devised by the first Curator in 1846 to demonstrate the botany and taxonomy of plant species. A much more recent feature was the very attractive Dry Meadow, undergoing renovation from its first iteration to eliminate the garden thugs which had taken over too much space. While in Cambridge we also had the opportunity to attend Shakespeare plays in two of the College Fellow's Gardens – beautiful private spaces normally open only to the select few.

Our Spanish trip started in Bilbao where we saw an entirely different type of garden in Jeff Koons' "Puppy" on the forecourt of the Guggenheim Museum. An enormous West Highland terrier carpeted in bedding plants and beautifully maintained, it is a sight to behold. The following week we spent in the Ribiera Sacra region of Galicia where we walked through precipitous vineyards and oak and chestnut forests. We were told that there is a movement to start managing the neglected chestnut forests again and we saw evidence of that in a few places.

My thanks to the committee members who stood in for me while I was away. At our September meeting we welcomed back Claire Mulcock, who has rejoined after a hiatus of a few years. Her expertise will be very welcome.

Meanwhile, back home, the Christchurch Botanic Gardens guiding season begins on the 1st of October. If you want to know more about the Gardens, these are a great opportunity. Walks cover a range of topics, from general interest walks in the garden and Mona Vale, to approximately twenty special interest topics. A schedule of walks for each month can be found on our website <https://friendschchbotanicgardens.org.nz/> under What's On.



President's Report continued

We have a number of new guides in training which is exciting. The Plant Stall is open again after a short winter break and it is a great place to source slightly unusual plants at a good price. The propagation team are enjoying the results of an upgrade to their nursery, and I would like to thank those of you who attended working bees to assist with this. There are opportunities for volunteers who wish to spend a few hours per week hands-on in the gardens, and possibly suitable for the less mobile is staffing the Kiosk for a half day shift.

Upcoming events are, for October, a visit to the Pegasus Bay Winery garden in Waipara. You will have the opportunity to buy ingredients for a picnic lunch from the delicatessen. A basket with all you need to enjoy your lunch is provided, and it is a most enjoyable experience. In November we have visiting rose specialists presenting alongside Heidi Connolly, Heritage Rose Garden and Woodland curator. Our Christmas party is scheduled for the afternoon of 7 December and at this you will have an opportunity to receive a progress report on the Cuninghame House renovations from Wolfgang Bopp.

The Heritage Rose garden, hidden away in the woodland area close to the Waipapa building of the hospital, is well worth a summer visit. The perennial underplanting is coming away and the roses just beginning to leaf up. In a few more weeks it will be beautiful. Another area of particular seasonal beauty is the cluster of magnolia trees near the West Bridge from the Riccarton Avenue carpark. Close by are the azaleas which will be in flower from mid-October. Some of these have a powerful perfume. Have you been looking out for the Raymond Herbert sculptures? These are the Daffodil on the riverbank in the Daffodil Woodland, the Rose, at the eastern entrance

of the formal rose garden, the Oak Leaf, tucked away behind the north end of the conservatories, and the Fern on the Lime Walk at an entrance into the NZ Natives area.

Another two sculptures worth looking out for are two carved tree stumps in the woodland area, a Squirrel behind the band rotunda and an Owl closer to the Pinetum. These will be of particular delight to children.

Do you know what the first official tree planted in the Botanic Gardens was, and where it is? If not, you could consider joining the Notable Trees Walk, one of the free 1.30pm daily walks starting at the Kiosk. A particularly interesting feature of this tree is the marked improvement in health since its root zone was protected from foot traffic.

I hope that you are all able to enjoy spring in our Botanic Gardens.

Margaret Metherell
President.





Mona Vale Update

Mona Vale, like the Botanic Gardens, is bursting into Spring. The bedding displays are looking very colourful and many of the deciduous trees are bursting into leaf.

There are many lovely rhododendrons and camelia flowering and staff are replanting in the Alistair McLeod Memorial Garden border. The Alistair MacLeod memorial Garden at Mona Vale was established between 1991 and 1998, with the generous donation of several hundred rhododendrons and camellias by the MacLeod family. The collection was given in memory of their son, Alistair John MacLeod (1959–1989).

The Bathhouse water feature has been installed and adds to the beautiful surroundings. Another addition has been a table and chair set and a park bench, which is constantly in use by visitors.

–Jeanette Christensen



Nona Milburn, Susan Lawrence and Nicky Brown trying out the new seating.

HERITAGE ROSES - SUNDAY 16TH NOVEMBER FRAN RAWLING AND MURRAY RADKA

Join two of New Zealand's leading rosarians for a fascinating insight into the world of beautiful, hardy and historic heritage roses.

Murray Radka, a former history teacher, will speak about the importance of the roses in human history, saving the New Zealand collection of historic roses, and creating a garden to house and preserve this collection for the future.

Fran Rawling will speak about the development of the heritage roses collection at the Dunedin Northern Cemetery, and why Heritage Roses Otago became involved in its restoration.

The Kiosk at 4:00pm (afternoon tea from 3:30pm)

\$5 members; \$10 non-members

Propagation Update

I'm sure you are all are familiar with the Plant Stall just inside the Armagh St gate of the Gardens, and those who came to the AGM will have heard how important the plant sales are to our finances, with sales of 6000 plants annually enabling us to sponsor an additional trainee every year, give grants to allow staff to attend conferences and support the work of the gardens generally. The nursery area has grown to keep up with the demand for plants but the irrigation system and surrounding ground areas were in dire need of an upgrade. Thanks to the cooperation of the Botanic Gardens and Friends, a major upgrade has just been completed.

We currently have 44 Benches, with the capacity for around 6000 plants (depending on the size of pot). First, we allowed the stock to run down over winter and then with the help of many members, all the remaining plants were moved to one end of the nursery so that new irrigation, weed-matting and finally gravel could be installed.



Then we repeated the process with the other half of the nursery. Benches were treated with moss-killer, loose screws replaced and finally they were re-levelled. We estimate that most of the plants were moved 3 times. Working bees were held 2 or 3 times a week as work progressed. Heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers and the Tuesday propagation team for the mahi and special thanks to Claire for master-minding the entire project and supplying chocolate biscuits.
-Vicki Steven

VISIT TO INVEREWE GARDENS, SCOTLAND



- Jane Cowan-Harris

On a recent visit to Scotland (land of my birth with several extended family members still living there) with my partner, Ben, we visited Inverewe Gardens, based in Wester Ross on the far north west coast of Scotland. It is about 90 minutes west of Inverness and sits on the coast of Loch Ewe, a sea loch.

The garden was established by Osgood Mackenzie in 1862 on a 2,100 acre estate brought for him by his mother. Osgood Mackenzie set about creating a windbreak first by planting large shrubs and trees such as Corsican Pine, Douglas fir and Rhododendrons. Once these were established he set about planting a garden of exotic plants in the 20 hectare (50 acre) garden available. What makes this garden so special is the warm Gulf Stream which passes this area of the coastline, allowing all sorts of plants that would not normally survive this far north, to flourish. The garden and estate are now the property of the National Trust of Scotland and were given to the Trust along with a generous endowment for their future upkeep by Osgood's daughter Mairi Sawyer in 1952.

The garden has a team of 10 full time gardeners, and it is a sight to behold with the beautiful background of Loch Ewe. I visited in Springtime about 50 years ago with my parents, when it was full of stunning rhododendrons and spring bulbs.



These rhododendrons still provide a wonderful structure to the gardens, even when not in flower.

Visiting in summertime, allowed us to enjoy the wonderful walled garden and you'll notice the great supply they have of seaweed right there on the shoreline, which is used in the gardens!

The rock gardens have many New Zealand and South African plants, and there was a magnificent display from a *Metrosideros umbellata* (our own rata tree) in full flower! Living myself with a sloping garden which can be windy, it was inspiring to see which New Zealand plants were growing in this decidedly chillier place!





Chelsea Flower Show 2025 – Part 2

Continued from our last newsletter

Art and gardens go together beautifully and this show has no shortage of beautiful artwork but now and then it also shows modern pieces, like this Saatchi sponsored smaller display garden that illustrates a typical British Countryside scene with artwork made of bailer-twine from Oxfordshire farms.

Inside the big marquee, stuffed full of colour and scent, are exhibits from all over the world. See this wonderful display of Clematis by Raymond Everson, planted in small wooden boats they are gently moving in the lapping waves on the beach. The attention to detail is wonderful, with numerous artifacts that complete the picture but don't detract from the stars of the show, the plants.



Another stunning example is the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) display of Fynbos. The cut flowers clothe a mountain with a wet seepage in the centre and small lake. As it is found in the Fynbos region, the water is stained brown with tannins, which the team have done by using Roybos teabags to be as authentic as possible.

–Wolfgang Bopp

Director

Christchurch Botanic Gardens

Kūmara/ Sweet Potato/ *Ipomea batatas*

-Laura Jones

While in the UK and listening to BBC Gardeners' Question Time, I heard about recent research from the Biology Department at Oxford University. I thought this might be of particular interest to Kiwis. Reading more opened up some interesting debate. Was there contact between the indigenous peoples of South America and Polynesia prior to the arrival of Europeans in the Pacific?

One of the strongest pieces of evidence for this contact is that vital food- the Sweet Potato. *Ipomea batatas* is a naturally occurring plant, which was later cultivated throughout the warmer parts of South America and brought back to Europe by the Spanish, along with all the other treasures they 'acquired'.

Imagine the surprise for Banks and Solander on Cook's first voyage (Endeavour 1769) when they found the same plant growing in the Society Islands. Careful scientists that they were, a specimen was dried and saved . This is the oldest specimen on record of a Sweet Potato from the Pacific and is kept in the British Museum.

Ipomea batatas is a species that has the ability to store starch in its stems as a tuber. This makes it invaluable for humans, allowing for storage and transportation. It also is of high nutritional value.

Given the importance of *I. batatas* as a food in South America, it was subsequently postulated that humans had transported the plant from there to the Pacific where it became widely cultivated.

Living in Aotearoa, we are aware of the great value placed on this crop. When humans were migrating from one island to another it would have been one of the most precious parts of their cargo.

I. batatas probably evolved in the tropical part of South America, around the Caribbean Coast where many *Ipomea* species are found. Humans reached S. America about 15,000 years ago. They soon realised the value of this plant and carried it with them into new areas like Peru and Brazil, so its cultivation spread.

Since then it has been distributed around the world and has huge economic importance. Many newer cultivars have been bred.



Tropical Oasis at Townend House

– Paula Candiotti

A New Chapter for the Conservatories' Collection

With Cunningham House temporarily closed for restoration, much of the tropical collection has been relocated to Townend House. This move has transformed the space into a lush, tropical oasis, offering visitors a fresh and vibrant display of exotic plants. Paula Candiotti and her colleagues from the nursery and conservatories team work continuously to ensure the displays remain vibrant and engaging for all who visit. Their dedication brings the beauty of the tropics to life in an unexpected setting.

Originally from Brazil, Paula grew up surrounded by the rich diversity of tropical plants, many of which flourish naturally in her homeland. Her childhood in one of the most biodiverse countries in the world sparked her deep interest in the fascinating adaptations and diversity of tropical plants.



Paula in Townend House

At 17, Paula moved to New Zealand, where she pursued studies in biodiversity management and scenic design at Unitec in Auckland. Eager to gain hands-on experience, she traveled across New Zealand, volunteering through the WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) program. This allowed her to immerse herself in horticulture and broaden her knowledge of plants and sustainable practices. Horticulture offered a perfect blend of two of her main interests, art and science. Settling in Christchurch in 2016, Paula began working as a temporary nursery and conservatory assistant at the Botanic Gardens. Over time, her dedication and interest led her to complete an apprenticeship, securing a permanent position as a Collection Curator.

Paula's passion for tropical plants continues to thrive in her work with the collection. Looking to the future, one of her aspirations is to integrate more ethnobotany into the Botanic Gardens, further enriching the visitor experience by showcasing the cultural and practical uses of plants in various societies.



Volunteer News – Lesley Clouston

Lesley Clouston, a long standing and tireless volunteer at the Thursday group of perennial propagates, has retired.

Lesley has been with us since 2011, and most recently took on the leadership role within the group. She has superb organisational skills and always worked to keep the plants healthy, and grouped properly to ensure a steady supply for sale. If she did not know about a plant, Lesley did her very best to find out its proper name and how to care for it.

On occasion, treasures from her own garden made their way in for us to propagate so that they could be more widely known and enjoyed. We wish Lesley all the best for her retirement which will be plant filled that's for sure. We will also miss the tasty mini muffins she often brought in for afternoon tea!



Go well Lesley; we will miss your capable expertise and the energy you brought to the propagating team.

Ginkgo biloba – Phillip Skilton

Family: Ginkgoaceae; Common name: Maidenhair Tree (Gin kyo – silver apricot Japanese)

Ginkgo biloba has been cultivated by the Chinese and Japanese in temples, monasteries and palace gardens since 1100 B.C. A native of Zhejiang province in S.E. China. There is some doubt as to whether it still exists in the wild.

Around 1712 it was first noted, for the West, by Engelbert Kaempher, physician/botanist with the Dutch East India Company at Deshina, Nagasaki, Japan. Around 1730, seed arrived in Holland. Around 1750 the oldest known tree in Britain was planted on the Duke of Argyll's estate. It was transplanted to Kew gardens in 1762.

Ginkgo is deciduous, turning bright yellow in autumn. It is dioecious, having separate male and female trees. It is the oldest living seed plant and is often referred to as a living fossil. It is tolerant of pollution and grows well in cities. It is very disease and pest resistant. Medicinal use of the leaves and nuts by Chinese dates back to 2800 B.C. The leaves contain oils believed to increase blood supply by dilating the blood vessels. Modern herbalists also use it. The nuts are edible and nutritious when roasted and are a Chinese delicacy.

References:

Brown, D (2002) *The RHS Encyclopaedia of herbs and their uses*, Dorling Kindersley

Campbell-Culver, M (2001) *The Origins of Plants*. Headline: pl 66

Visch, M & Tomlinson, P, (2003) *Guide notes*

Vogan, R (2003) *Flora*, Bateman: p 638.

Halloween Scarecrow

Saturday 18 October 2-4pm

Get spooky this Halloween!

Create your own scarecrow—solo or with friends and whānau—and take home a hand-crafted character to bring a touch of Halloween magic to your garden or home.

\$55 Solo/Group (\$70 Non-Members)

Healing Herbs with Valmai Becker

Healing Herbs Demonstration

Sunday 2 November 2-4pm at The Kiosk

\$65 (\$85 Non-Members)

Includes tisanne to take home.

Herbal Skincare Workshop

Sunday 9 November 10am - 1pm at Phytofarm

Create your own healing salve & lip balm to take home. **\$145 (\$185 Non-Members)**

Botanical Embroidery

Saturday 15 November 2-5pm

Learn the art of hand embroidery – no experience needed!

Join textile artist Sawi Thorpe for a relaxed and inspiring 3-hour workshop exploring the timeless craft of hand embroidery.

\$105 (\$135 Non-Members)

A Taste of Tangleby

Saturday 22 November 1.30pm

An enchanting afternoon at the beautiful Tangleby Gardens. Featuring a talk from the award-winning author, cooking demonstration and decadent afternoon tea, you're sure to be inspired by Tangleby's captivating Canterbury setting.

\$95 (\$120 Non-Members)

Harakeke Crafting

Sustainable Nature Craft

Kono (four corner) Basket

Sat 29 November: 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Sun 30 November 10am - 1pm

Putiputi (Flax Flowers)

Sunday 30 November 1.30 - 4.30pm

\$40 (\$50 Non-Members)

Fresh Floral Wreaths

Thu 11 Dec 10.30am - 1pm OR 6.30pm - 9pm

Learn the art of making a stunning Christmas-themed fresh floral wreath. Perfect for adding

a personalised touch to your Christmas door, table or gifting to someone special! A glass of bubbles on arrival. A repeat of Isabelle's popular workshop from last year.

\$125 (\$145 Non-Members)

Botanical Photography

Thursday 12 February 6.30-8.30pm

An evening of photography among the flowers with Stacey Weaver.

Explore composition, lighting, and creative techniques; experiment with simple indoor set-ups at The Kiosk before heading outdoors to capture the Botanic Gardens in the glow of golden hour.

\$65 (\$85 Non-Members)

Garden Design

Evenings 17 February - 24 March 6.30-9pm

Concludes with a comprehensive all-day practical session on Sunday 29 March

Join us for an immersive garden design course that will help you see your outdoor space with fresh eyes.

Over seven sessions, you'll gain practical skills and design knowledge to create a beautiful and functional garden tailored to your needs.

\$590 CHS Members or bundle with a CHS

Membership for \$655

Tea in My Garden

Beginning in December, explore three unique Waitaha (Canterbury) gardens, meet the gardeners, and enjoy a guided tour through their beautiful grounds.

Saturday 6 December 10.30am - 12pm

Te Whare Waiutuutu Kate Sheppard House

Price: \$35 (\$45 Non-member) - includes

Museum entry. 83 Clyde Road, Ilam

Friday 13 February 10.30am - 12pm

Blue House Amberley

Price: \$30 (\$40 Non-member)

Friday 13 March 10.30am - 12pm

Ōhinetahi

Price: \$65 (\$80 Non-member)

Includes home-made morning tea served inside the beautiful home of Sir Miles Warren.

Garden Life November

Tuesday 4th 6pm & Wednesday 5th 1pm

Main Speaker: Helen Osborne

Where Change Took Root: Kate Sheppard & the Landscape of Suffrage

This talk explores the remarkable life and enduring impact of Kate Sheppard through the lens of her home and garden in Ōtautahi Christchurch.

As Aotearoa New Zealand's leading suffrage campaigner, Sheppard understood the power of persistence, strategy, and community — values still deeply rooted in the place she once called home. Helen Osborne shares insights into Kate's vegetarianism and its influence on the historic garden, as well as the transformation of the house into a public site of memory. The presentation highlights how this space continues to spark conversations about women's rights, political change, and social justice — inviting reflection on how heritage places can serve as powerful reminders of activism, resistance, and the everyday lives that shape history. Helen is the Property Lead for Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, managing Te Whare Waiutuutu Kate Sheppard House Museum.

Mini Speaker: Bear Astill – Midgarden

Discover the world of chilli peppers with Midgarden, a small organic enterprise in Ōtautahi/Christchurch. Founded by Bear Astill and Amy Wilson, it has grown from a lockdown passion into a thriving business specialising in unique, flavourful chilli varieties. Join us to hear their story, learn about sustainable growing, and explore the fiery world of chillies!

Free for Members & Friends of the Botanic Gardens. Tea, coffee and baking afternoon. Wine & nibbles evening

Unless noted our workshops are held in The Kiosk, just over the footbridge from the Armagh St carpark in the Botanic Gardens

www.chsgardens.co.nz/shop





Friends' Contact Details

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