

The Auckland Garden

Newsletter of the Auckland Botanic Gardens and Friends

March 2019



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Front cover image: *Eucomis* Photo: Jack Hobbs

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The
Auckland Garden
is the quarterly
newsletter of the
Auckland Botanic
Gardens and Friends

Auckland
Botanic Gardens
102 Hill Road
Manurewa
Auckland 2105

Jack's update

It has been an interesting start to the year, with heavy sustained rainfall late last year followed by dry hot weather. Weeds did get away on us for a while, but the staff have done a great job lately getting them under control.

The Pacific Pathway is progressing well, with many of the concrete paths laid and boulders placed in the nodes. Works have recently extended into the Perennial Garden, further inconveniencing our visitors. We remain optimistic that everything will be completed and gardens restored before the opening of Sculpture in the Gardens in early November. I know our Wiri Rambler volunteers are keen to get underway again.

Our current educational exhibition entitled Gardeners of the Galaxy is attracting much interest. It is based on NASA research that found humans cannot exist in space for long periods without plants. The visitor centre Huakaiwaka features a crashed rocket which challenges visitors to work out how to survive. Key partners in the display are the Manukau Beautification Charitable Trust, MOTAT, the Stardome Observatory & Planetarium, the Auckland Astronomical Society and Hyalite who installed the hydroponic system.

The idea was sparked when Julia Watson attended the American Public Garden Association (APGA) conference in Canada as the Buchanan Award recipient 2017. Julia noticed a presentation on space travel attracted the attention of young people, and thought it might work well at the Gardens.

If you have not yet checked it out there is still time as it runs until 10 March. Apart from the visitor centre displays it is also worth taking the solar system walk to the Potter Children's Garden where a space-themed edible garden has been installed. To access more information, check our website or load the STQRY app which includes lots of interesting stories on Gardeners of the Galaxy and the sculpture collection.

The display gardens around the visitor centre Huakaiwaka have been attracting much attention over the summer. Although not everyone likes it, the novel ornamental millet *Pennisetum glaucum* 'Purple Baron' has certainly been a talking point. It provides stark contrast of colour, texture and form intermingled with *Gaura lindheimeri* 'So White'. *Begonia* 'Dragon Wing Red' completes a striking trifecta. The artistic Pippa Lucas devised the plantings. The *Gaura* are the same plants on display last summer,

cleverly cut back in autumn then hidden by winter bedding until they regrew in spring. All Pippa had to do was trim them lightly when about 30 cm tall and they have flowered almost ever since.

I regard *Eucomis* as highly valuable but underutilised bulbs. They naturalise readily in Auckland, tolerate our typically heavy soils better than most, and provide prolonged displays without any fuss. The summer displays in our African Garden are always eye-catching. The extensive *Eucomis* breeding programme undertaken by Eddie Welsh in Palmerston North utilised seed collected from our plants many years ago. During a recent visit to Joy Nurseries I was very impressed with 'Victoria Joy', a new *Eucomis* hybrid bred by Terry and Lindsay Hatch.

Early this year we welcomed our new apprentice Rosie Rolls to the Gardens team. Rosie made the interesting switch from zoo keeper at Auckland Zoo to a horticultural career



as she wanted a new challenge and thinks the Gardens will a great place to pursue her love of learning new things.

Jack Hobbs



Visitor Services updates

The visitor centre team will see some personnel changes over the next three months, thankfully all for good reasons. Some of you will have met Natasha Salt (Tash) who worked part time driving digital, display and engagement support and marketing. She had a beautiful baby boy, Harley, and has been on maternity leave for a year. During this period Tash and her husband Austin built a house in Mangawhai and have now moved there. Commuting is out of the question so sadly she is unable to come back to her role. Kate McGee has been great covering the role whilst Tash was away, however she is also pregnant and due in April so is unable to consider a permanent role. Needless to say I am throwing out the chair at that desk. Shortly we will be interviewing for a new

permanent member for the Project Officer role, and hopefully we will be able to announce the successful candidate in the next newsletter.

Another member of the Visitor Services team many of you know is Nicky Gordon. After seven years in a permanent position with us she is retiring in March and then departing to Europe for two months in celebration. We will be holding an afternoon tea on Friday 29 March. If any of you would like to join us in celebrating her time here please contact me so we can organise catering. Nicky is interested in staying involved with us as she loves guiding people around the Gardens and we are keen to take her up on this offer.

Micheline Newton

Little Sprouts

Join us on the first Wednesday of every month for stories, songs and craft that celebrate nature and the seasons, before you head off to explore the gardens.

- Usually held in the Library.
- Suitable for children 5 years and under.
- Children must be accompanied by a caregiver at all times.
- Sessions start at 10 a.m. and run for one hour.

Come along with your little ones and let's have fun together!

Wednesday guided walks

Every Wednesday at 10.30 a.m.
Follow us for a guided walk of the Gardens.

See what is blooming and discover interesting stories behind the plants and collections.

This free walk leaves from the Visitor Centre every Wednesday.

Volunteer update

The heat has been relentless this summer and we'd like to thank everyone who has helped with the weeding and upkeep of the Gardens during this hot time of year. Site access due to construction has also been a challenge, and we look forward to the final product when the Pacific Strip project is complete. We've had some extra help over the summer holidays with a group of young volunteers joining our team to run activities in the Gardeners of the

Galaxy MOTAT module (see photo), and adding to the support we're receiving from regular volunteers who are also helping out.

When the Pacific Strip is nearing completion we'd like to invite all volunteers to a "sneak preview" to show the progress of the project – watch your inboxes for an invitation. We're looking forward to a busy year ahead, especially with Sculpture in the Gardens on the near horizon.



Summer has been a great season with visitors of all ages enjoying the Gardeners of the Galaxy exhibition. We've had over 200 people attend evening stargazing events, and a jam-packed two-week community engagement programme all about the importance of plants for life. The

exhibition runs until 10 March and we hope you get a chance to see it. With the event season upon us, we have Elvis in the Gardens, the Hospice Sunrise Walk and Eye on Nature all coming up in March. Keep an eye on the "What's On" section of our website for upcoming events.

Julia Watson



Renovating our Native Plant Ideas garden room

Like any house renovation, there is noise, dust and disruption but the end result is usually worth it. Our major renovation at the moment is the construction of the Pacific Pathway, and as a consequence one of the “rooms”, the Native Plant Ideas garden, is being partly redesigned.

Native Plant Ideas will be re-orientated to provide a new visitor viewing experience. Much of this starts with enticing them from the Pacific Pathway into this “room”. A common garden design technique is using plant colour to attract attention, with red in particular being a strong colour that catches the eye and makes distances appear shorter. From the node entrance visitors will

see a bright green *Griselinia* hedge forming a barrier next to the new pathway and providing a contrasting backdrop against which various shades of maroon and red-coloured flaxes and *Coprosma* will stand out. Pink-flowering hebe, the distinctive red flower of the kakabeak and the reddish new growth of the kiokio fern will also be blended through to form a native perennial border.

Once you are enticed into this room, the vista has already been modified so that a visitor can see the length of the garden and orientate themselves. Gone are the pohutukawa hedge and tall clumps of flax blocking the view; now the eye is drawn the length of the garden to the strong form of the *Splayed* sculpture supported by



the curved, clipped *Carpodetus* and *Pittosporum* hedge.

Many of these plants for this project are being sourced through Joy Plants, a nursery we regularly use that supplies a diversity of natives and exotics both common and rare. In fact, several of their rare native plants will add to one of the other major changes to this garden, the Collector's Corner. This little pocket garden has an assortment of hard-to-find or rare native plants. With the new pathway, this part of the garden will now be enclosed with hedging, a small meandering path added, and

steel structures inserted to grow climbers. This room-within-a-room garden will provide a little surprise corner of how diverse our native plants can be.

So, will this be a successful renovation? Already parts of the pathway concrete have been poured, rocks placed in the nodes and large trees dropped in. It is beginning to look impressive. Hopefully the little Native Plant Ideas room will be just as good once planted and visitors can be inspired to use native plants when renovating their own gardens.

Jeffery Jones



Translocation Plant Conference

In mid-November 2018 the Friends kindly funded my flights and conference registration to attend the Australian Network for Plant (ANPC) Conservation conference in Canberra, Australia. The theme of the conference was Plant Translocations, a key component of the conservation work that is undertaken in Australia, and to a much lesser extent in New Zealand.

There were two days of technical talks from mainly ecological consultants across Australia. I gave a talk about our experience with myrtle rust, highlighting the training we have been involved in, the use of sentinel surveys (plants selected for monitoring new or potential pests or diseases) and the seed collection project on Great Barrier Island between Kew Gardens, Department of Conservation and the Gardens. Bec Stanley also gave a talk on using our horticultural skills in a botanic garden for plant conservation. Both talks were very well received and created some interesting discussions in the breaks.

There was a full-day translocation workshop which was based on

the latest translocation guidelines that had been released from the ANPC. This was something I was particularly interested in learning more about and now have pages and pages of notes to refer to in the future. I also went on a conference field trip to the Australian National Botanic Gardens for a garden tour and behind-the-scenes of their seed bank. I'm a regular visitor to Canberra (my family all live there) so I have seen the gardens many times but it was great to see the inner workings of the seed bank and what a small seed bank can achieve. A seed bank of this size is something that we in New Zealand might work towards. The Australian National BG plant collections are organised by family which is harder to appreciate. However Australian plants are so diverse and attractive with colourful showy flowers and it was great to spend some time learning a few new plants. One plant that caught my eye was a display *Stylidium* in pots around the visitors centre. Also known as trigger plants, which trap their visitors, the one photographed is found only in Victoria, Australia and is rare.

Emma Bodley



From the President

Flowers and Plants – the theme requested for this month's newsletter. I had to think long and hard about which flower I would choose, but there it was in front of me – Hydrangeas – the "painters' palette". Commonly known as Granny's or Nana's flowers, as they have been favoured by many in that age bracket for years, they seldom feature in modern garden designs. Many country roads in Franklin have them growing on the verge, along with *Agapanthus*, but they are generally the common blue/white

flowers and not the ones of which I have my love-affair, that change colours throughout the year like a chameleon.

I know that you can control the colour of hydrangeas by additives to the soil – but I enjoy the suspense like a potter taking fired glazed pots from a kiln – or from a raku firing; or a print taken off a paper having been through a printer. I have taken cuttings or bought the colours of flowers that I like – and then watched to see if they come into flower the



next season, true to colour. I deeply regret not taking cuttings from the plants with beautiful pale blue/green flowers, from my previous home – cuttings from plants grown by my parents, and the soft pink/mauve flowers with hints of deep purple. I guess they would have changed in a new environment. I shall never know.

My two current plants are delighting me – planted side by side but the flowers totally different in colour. I have flowers taken from them in vases in my house and watch as they change colours, even as they slowly dry. From spring, through summer and into autumn, they will provide me with joy – a little different in each season. As I thought about this report, I looked up – and there above my chair was one of my

paintings (painted a few years ago), I have just brought out of storage and replaced the one that had been in that place for two years – a still life with hydrangeas, exactly the same hues as the flowers in the vase on the coffee table. Fluke!

I checked on some that a friend had in her garden – last time I saw them they were a deep wine colour – most unusual but when I saw them last week they were a most uninteresting faded purplish colour. Hydrangeas in the Botanic Gardens are growing in the cool shade on a path near the entrance to the Japanese pavilion and the camellias. Last summer I visited this area and spotted my favourite blue/green hues – a cutting from that plant was potted up and later planted in my garden but not yet flowering. The suspense is great!

Dianne Glenn ONZM, JP

Introducing some of the Friends Committee

Bill Burrill

Bill is Immediate Past-President of the Friends. Originally a farmer in Flatbush, he served for 18 years on the Auckland Regional Council and for 9 years was Chairman of the ARC Parks Committee. He is a past President and is now Patron of the Friends of Regional Parks. In the



New Year Honours of 2013, Bill was awarded the Queen's Service Medal for his work in enhancing Auckland's natural environment.

Bill has long been a supporter of the Botanic Gardens and the Friends being at various times, trustee, member of the Executive Committee and President. He was involved in

the relocation of the Ellerslie Flower Show to the Gardens, the building of Huakaiwaka, the visitor centre, the development of the Potter Children's Garden and the planning for Sculpture in the Gardens. In 2011 he was elected a Life Member of the Friends. His wife, Maggie, is also a former President of the Friends and a Life Member.

Graeme Hauer

Graeme was elected a member of the Executive Committee in 2005, served a term as President, starting in 2010, and has remained on the Committee since then. For more than 10 years, from 2007 to 2018, he led the Growing Friends and here his professional background in landscaping and garden maintenance, as well as his practical skills and common sense, have proved invaluable. He managed to develop the enviable facilities now enjoyed by the Growing Friends and the sale of plants has contributed greatly to the Friends finances. His work, both as President and as convenor of the Growing Friends, was acknowledged in a 2014 when



he was elected a Life Member of the Friends. Last year, Graeme decided that it was time for a change and relinquished his position with the Growing Friends; he is currently serving as a library volunteer.

Viv Canham

My life & interest...

Born in Hawkes Bay, I've lived the last 40 years in Auckland. I met my

future husband in UK in 1975. Peter came back to NZ with me for a three week holiday. I knew he'd love this country so much that he wouldn't

want to leave - and I was right!

A lot of my working life was in the banking industry, although I had a Property Management business in Manurewa for 10 years before I retired.

We've owned a property in Karaka for going on 20 years. It is a two acre "bush block", or rather it was a "mostly blackberry and woolly nightshade" block when we arrived. But it was blessed with three large ponds, an interesting contour, and hundreds of young trees planted by the previous owner. These trees, and the additions we have made since, keep us busy - trimming, thinning, felling and chopping for firewood.

My approach to gardening is the opposite of landscape planning, I'm afraid. I tend to buy a plant that catches my eye, then get it home and try to find a gap to plant it in! Several years ago I "heeled in" a liquidamber tree until I could decide where it should go permanently. It never did get moved and it has now grown to 10 to 12 metres tall! Thank goodness its position is not too bad.

On a trip to Vanuatu a number of years back, I really liked the entrance way to a particular restaurant, which you accessed by walking through a grove of palm trees with their attractive, ringed trunks. I decided to try to emulate that in my garden and it has worked out well. With the addition of some date palms, cycads

and other tropical plants it is looking quite exotic!

I really enjoy growing plants from seeds, getting them started in the glasshouse. It gives me the opportunity to grow large numbers of plants to provide blocks of colour in the flower bed. That is, if our free-range hens leave the plants alone.

I particularly like growing vegetables from seed. It is very satisfying to harvest produce from plants grown from scratch.

Recently I found a couple of seeds in an over-ripe apple which were beginning to sprout, so I put them in a pot and I now have three little apple trees growing! Do 'Splendour' seeds grow true to type?

The hens provide me with heaps of quality fertiliser, and a lovely friend down the road drops off a truckload of stable manure from time to time, so I am very lucky. The plant growth, especially in the vege garden, can sometimes be a bit overwhelming. The foliage of the Maori potatoes this year was taller than I am. I was concerned that they might be all tops and no spuds, but there is a good crop there.

I tend to underestimate the size that the plants will grow to and everything in the vege garden can get a bit crowded. This year the courgettes are shouldering out the broccoli and strawberries. And I've had to plant

my overflow of aubergines and capsicums in pots, but one year I will get it right.

Apart from being recently appointed as "Health & Safety" officer for the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens, I am also a member of the Wiri Rambler team, which is so ably run by Kate Moodie. I guide, and Peter drives the tractor.

We really enjoy our interaction with people on the Rambler. A surprising number of tourists appear to have the Botanic Gardens on their "to-

do" list, so we meet folk from all around the world. It is also great to see Aucklanders using the Gardens for their recreation and enjoyment. It can be a tiring day on the Rambler but we come home satisfied that we have made the Gardens more accessible to people, and hopefully have helped them increase their knowledge and discover new areas to explore. One fact that visitors find most surprising is that the total number of permanent staff at the Gardens is just over 30, to run the whole operation! Thankfully we have over 100 volunteers to back them up.



Botanical Art Worldwide

A review of a very successful art adventure.

In 2017 the American Society of Botanical Artists invited interested countries to develop exhibitions of contemporary botanic art featuring their indigenous flora. The invitation came to the Botanical Art Society of New Zealand (BASNZ) and Lesley Alexander and Sandra Morris, members of BASNZ and the Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens took up the challenge of organising New Zealand's contribution – one of twenty-five countries ultimately taking part. They presented the idea to the Gardens who offered gallery space and to the Friends who agreed to provide establishment funding. I (Liz Powell) was recruited into the team, the Steering Committee for the event. Submissions were called for and although these came in slowly at first, by the deadline we had received ninety-six submissions from fifty-two artists plus six from three secondary school students.

The selection panel of Sri Benham, Ross Ferguson and Bec Stanley selected forty works for the major travelling exhibition with a second tier of ten works to be exhibited if space allowed. All six student works were included.

The exhibition opened in the gallery

in the Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre on March 30, 2018, and a very well attended Private View/formal opening was held on the evening of Saturday, 7 April. Attendance over the three months of the Auckland exhibition was high – we estimate that over four thousand visitors came through the gallery – comments were positive and sales of art works and the cards and prints provided by artists, were excellent. A series of well-attended workshops was presented by a number of the artists during April and May. Friday, 18 May was designated as Worldwide Botanic Art Day, and New Zealand, by virtue of our position relative to the International Date Line, kicked off proceedings with a powhiri by members of Ngati Tamaoho, welcome speeches, demonstrations by eight artists and a talk by Dr Robert Franich and Bec Stanley on *Dactylanthus*, its relationship with the short-tailed bat and plans to protect this endangered species.

Following the Auckland exhibition the major exhibition and the student works travelled to Wellington to the Tree House Gallery in the Wellington Botanic Gardens. Lesley, Sandra and I travelled down to the opening on 30 July and joined an enthusiastic crowd of Wellington lovers of botanical art. Reports of attendance and sales from Wellington were again positive

and enthusiastic - another very successful showing.

Finally, the exhibition travelled to Blenheim, to the Millennium Gallery, with the works displayed there from 3 November to 9 December. Again reports indicated an enthusiastic response to the exhibition – no art works sold but cards proved quite popular.

The works were returned to Auckland in mid-December for distribution to buyers, many of whom had waited patiently from May to receive their works, and unsold works returned to artists.

Over the length of the exhibition thirty-five works and a very large number of prints and cards were sold, which is very encouraging to the exhibiting artists. An additional and unexpected positive outcome of the exhibition was an increase in interest and membership of the Friends Painting Group which is going from strength to strength. Botanical art is alive and well in New Zealand!

Our grateful thanks to those who have supported this wonderfully

successful exhibition from the beginning:

- Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens and BASNZ for establishment funding
- Botanic Gardens staff and volunteers for all their practical and administrative help
- the artists for their participation and talent
- the judging panel for their expertise
- Jane Zimmerman and Jenny Haslimeier for the design of posters, advertising and brochures
- Annette Toon for website and e-news management
- Richard Mathieson and Phil Smith for gallery preparation and assistance with hanging works
- John Leech Framers for preparation of works for hanging
- Gordon Harris Art and Graphic Store for provision of People's Choice and Student awards.
- Carlee Reid, Team Leader, Customer Services, Wellington Botanic Gardens
- Cressida Bishop, Director, Millennium Public Art Gallery, Blenheim.

Liz Powell
For BAWW Steering Committee

Volunteer corner

Growing Friends opportunity

The Growing Friends are looking to recruit three new members.

We are a group of volunteers from the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Garden who run a small nursery to produce, present and sell plants to the visiting public to raise funds for the Friends organisation.

We have a working and sale day each Thursday from 8.30 a.m. to noon and a major sale on the first Sunday of each month from 9.00 a.m. until 2.00 p.m.

We are involved in producing plants from seeds, cuttings or divisions, potting, maintenance, and presentation of the plants for sale, and actually selling the plants to the public.

Members commit to attending at least 30 times per year, including Sundays.

The rewards come in the form of friendships, plant knowledge and opportunities to access interesting plants.

Gardens call for volunteers

We are looking for help in the following two areas:

Pest control

We have updated our pest control system and now bait and trap on a "pulsing system". We are therefore looking for volunteers with a reasonable level of fitness who are able to walk bush tracks and are willing to help for four hours twice a week in January, April, August and November.

Help in the Children's Garden

Our teachers are looking for two or three keen gardeners to help maintain the education garden located behind the classroom in the Potter Children's Garden. (It is visited and used by thousands of school children each year as part of our Learning Through Experience education programmes.)

The general gardening tasks are important to the resourcing and delivery of these programmes, and your help would support our next generation of gardeners. Tasks will include weeding, composting, propagating, planting and pruning.

Please contact Julia Watson if you are interested in any of these positions or would like to find out more:

julia.watson@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
or phone 021895108

Growing Friends

The year has got away to a good start with reasonable sales despite the dry weather. We have had a few dry moments, but who hasn't? Our stock is looking good and improving. Our February Sunday sale raised over \$400.00. Sales improve measurably when the overflow carpark is opened. People are generally bringing their own carry bags, so our use of plastic bags has dropped.

Thursday plant sale: Come along to the weekly Growing Friends Plant sale and choose from a wide variety of plants to take home. Every

Thursday in summer, 9 a.m. to midday.

Sunday plant sale: 1st Sunday of each month 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Look for the blue flag past the Herb Garden and enter via the lower nursery entrance.

Members of the Friends get a 25% discount on presentation of their membership card. Please bring your own bag to carry any plants you purchase.

Bronwen Rowse

Jack's next guided tour

Each year Jack Hobbs leads a trip somewhere in the world where plants are always a focus. Later this year he is leading a group on an inland waterways cruise from New York to Montreal. The 13-night cruise through locks and canals takes in waterfront communities, wildlife habitats and autumn foliage colours. The many highlights will include a tour of New York city, the pristine Catskill Mountains, the Chateau de Frontenac in Quebec, and a couple of days in Ottawa.

Departure from Auckland is on 22 September returning on 14 October. For more information contact

Pukekohe Travel on 0800 785386, or www.pukekohetravel.co.nz



Friends autumn bus trip

Saturday 13 April

We will be visiting two beautiful gardens at Whitford. Firstly Huntingwood, a medium-sized country garden, and then Ayrlies, a very large Garden of International Significance. There will be time at Ayrlies for anyone who wishes to walk to the wetland area.

Hot water and milk will be available at both gardens for morning tea and lunch. Bring your own cups, teabags and food, etc.

Plants may be purchased at Ayrlies.

PLEASE NOTE: BEFORE SENDING YOUR PAYMENT YOU MUST PHONE KATE MOODIE PH. 297 7234 TO BOOK YOUR SEATS. If there are seats available you are able to pay by direct deposit to ASB 12 3011 0757619 00. Put your name and indicate that this is for the bus trip. You can also pay by returning the enclosed slip with your cheque or paying by cash or eftpos at the Visitors Centre.

When: Saturday, 13 April

Where: Meet at the Auckland Botanic Gardens

Bring: Bring your own cups, teabags and food, etc.

Cost: \$35.00 per person (includes all entry fees). Plus plants may be purchased at Ayrlies.

Itinerary: Saturday 13 April
9.00 a.m. at the Botanic Gardens for a 9.15 a.m. departure, Huntingwood , Ayrlies,
4.30 p.m. arrival back at the Botanic Gardens.

Tickets will be posted to you on receipt of your payment.

Bookings to be paid by 27 March.
Friends are welcome to bring a friend.

Lucy Cranwell lecture

Preliminary Notice - Lucy Cranwell Lecture, Auckland Museum Auditorium, 7.00 p.m., 3 April 2019. Dr David Mabberley, former Director of Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney. The full details are not yet available but Dr Mabberley will probably speak on the Banks Florilegium.

Painting Group - February 2019

As usual the summer has passed by in a flash and as always there was an abundance of beautiful flowers begging me to draw them. I promised myself that I would have lots of paintings and drawings to show at our first meeting of the year but well the less said about that the better!

Our year started off well with 15 members turning up to our first meeting at the end of January, keen to catch up and chat about all things arty or botanical or both. It is always exciting to see what everyone is working on, hear about their plans for the next painting, how their gardens are faring or exhibitions they have been to over the summer.

As usual we will continue with our artist demonstrations every other month and have what promises to be a great line up of artists to entertain and enlighten us. It's always fascinating to hear how different artists go about their work and often by watching them paint or draw we get that "eureka" moment when we suddenly discover that elusive "something" that will enhance our own way of working. I am always amazed at how generous our visiting artists are with their tips and suggestions and often it's that simple little hint that will make our roses glow or leaves leap off the

page.

It is not only watercolour or colour pencil artists that come to demonstrate. So far, we have Val Cuthbert lined up to show us how to make linocut prints. She introduced us to dry point printing last year and was very well received so we are delighted she would like to come back. For those who like to paint landscapes, we have Bernadette Parsons coming to demonstrate for us and Marie Sanders, a pastel artist has just agreed to show us her work too. We just need to confirm which month they will come.

I think one of the great things about our group is that, although we all have art in common, our members lead such interesting and diverse lives. It was while chatting with new member Maureen Conquer, at our Christmas meeting last year, that I discovered that she is a keen forager among other things. I am thrilled that Maureen will be speaking at our April meeting – definitely one to put in your diaries.

We have had a few members ask us to provide some sessions specifically for those with less experience in drawing and painting so that will be on the schedule too. Now, if you are reading this, thinking you might like to join but are hesitant because you

"can't draw", this is the time to get involved. Get in touch and I will put you on the mailing list so you will hear what we have arranged. Being keen to "have a go" is the first step – the rest comes with practice. Why not pop along to our next meeting and see what we are doing.

I have, at long last, completed a video of all 56 artworks we had on show in the gallery for the "Ngā Tipu Taketake – Indigenous Flora" exhibition last year. As part of the Worldwide exhibition we were asked to provide a slideshow of 40 paintings. This meant we couldn't put them all on which was a real shame as we felt they all deserved

to be seen. So here it is – just type "Ngā Tipu Taketake 56 paintings" into Google, click on "videos", and the green slideshow posted by Lesley Smith is the one to watch. Enlarge it to full screen and sit back and enjoy. If you are interested in seeing the slideshows/videos of other countries in the Botanical Art Worldwide exhibition, go to <https://www.botanicalartworldwide.info> and click on "slideshows". Countries are still adding theirs so pop back occasionally to see what's new.

If you would like to know more about our painting group, get in touch with me, Lesley Alexander on lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com or give me a call on 09 412 2189 or 021 1617070.

Lesley Alexander

Take note...

The Friends website

is re-amalgamating with the Gardens website
www.aucklandbotanicgardens.co.nz

Find the Friends webpage via the button at the bottom of the Gardens homepage, or via the 'About Us' option on the top menu.

Friends email addresses

We have two new email addresses replacing our other ones:

For general enquiries and to contact our administrator, Irene, address your email to:
friendsofabg@gmail.com

To contact Judy, our treasurer, address your email to:
treasurerfriendsabg@gmail.com

Autumn seasonal activities

Autumn is a good time for bed preparation, fertilising ornamentals, trimming hedges, planting trees and shrubs, sowing lawns and harvesting the last of the summer crops.

Feed the soil

Summer crops reward us with wonderful fruit and vegetables, but they also require a lot of nutrients from the soil to produce crops, so it's important to enrich the soil with organic matter such as compost before you plant your winter vegetables. Danielle also adds worm cast to the beds when she is planting the winter edible display.

Planting time

Plant trees, shrubs, perennials and winter annuals. Plants quickly establish in the warm moist soils. Trees and shrubs will have time to establish their roots by next summer to survive dry conditions. Brassicas (cabbages, cauliflowers, broccoli, kales) suit planting in autumn as night temperature cools. Silverbeet, leek, Florence fennel, winter salads (mesclun mix), kohlrabi, celeriac lettuce will keep your winter vegetable harvest going until spring.

There is still time to plant bulbs such as freesias, babianas, lachenalias and tritonias. Plant these bulbs in sunny places with free draining soil, or into containers.

Apply mulch to garden beds and around trees and shrubs to retain moisture and suppress weeds. An added value of mulch is that as it breaks down, it helps aerate the soil and feeds soil microorganisms.

Feed your plants

Early autumn is the best time to feed ornamental plants if you want reward in spring. We feed our ornamentals with a mix of a fish-based fertiliser (Pacific Biofert) and organic blood and bone at a ratio of 80:20. It is best to apply the fertiliser when rain is expected.

Trim hedges

Hedges and topiaries can be trimmed as soon as the hot weather dissipates. While the cool weather will slow growth, it will allow new foliage to mature to handle winter frosts. The trimmed hedges and shaped topiaries will provide architecture in your garden in winter when the garden is looking bare.

Sow lawns

This is the perfect time to tackle lawn renovations and sow lawn seeds. The warm days and cool nights are perfect for seed germination. Water your lawn seeds every three days to keep moisture in the soil and help seeds to germinate.

Match-making for *Pennantia corymbosa*

We grow both native species of *Pennantia* at the Gardens. The most famous is *Pennantia baylisiana*, one of the rarest plants in the world remaining as just one individual in the wild from Great Island (Manawatawhi) in the Three Kings group. Its more common cousin is *P. corymbosa* or kaikomako, a much smaller-leaved tree with a divaricate juvenile growth form. There are several kaikomako in the Native Plant Identification Trail with their larger-leaved adult phase emerging from the messy tangle of the juvenile stage. They are some of my favourites of any species in the garden; I wish we could hold them at this stage! Kaikomako is not a common tree in Auckland or Northland. When it's found around

here, it's often alongside streams, on colder south-facing slopes or valleys where frost sits.

We are fortunate to have a wild kaikomako in the native bush alongside the Puhinui at the Gardens. We've never found any seedlings. We think that this may mean we only have one tree, or if other trees exist, that we haven't located yet, they are of the same gender. This is because kaikomako (like *P. baylisiana*) is dioecious. Around 20% of New Zealand native plants also have separate male and female plants. It's not a problem for reproduction as long as the plant is common and there is a chance pollination between plants can occur. If we are correct and we

Pennantia corymbosa



have only one tree, pollination is not possible. This individual is too tall for us to take cuttings but it looks like it has some life in it yet so our conservation strategy is to locate seed of local kaikomako to propagate and plant alongside the Puhinui which may one day produce our own wild local seedlings. Starting really locally we've looked in Murphy's Bush where Andrew Dakin recorded

kaikomako seedlings in the 1970s; however we did not locate either seedlings or adult trees. We know of a small population at Clevedon Scenic Reserve but are keen to hear if any Friends know of any other local south Auckland trees. It might be that they are also lone survivors and it would be great to get them together.

Bec Stanley

Pennantia baylisiana



Davidia involucrata

Davidia is one of the most interesting trees in the Gardens, interesting because of the history of its introduction into cultivation and interesting because of the two great white bracts around the flowers. These give the various names by which it is known – the “dove tree”, the “handkerchief tree” or the “ghost tree”. In Mandarin it is the “gong tong”.

The generic name *Davidia* commemorates Père Armand David, a 19th century French missionary in China. He was a noted naturalist who sent the first giant panda, alive if short-lived, to Paris, thousands of plant specimens to French botanists and for reportedly introducing gerbils as pets to Europe. His name has also been given to the Père David deer. The specific name, *involucrata*, comes from “involucrate”: having a pair or more of bracts at the base of an inflorescence. These bracts are the plant’s most distinctive feature. They are thought to attract pollinating insects.

The herbarium specimens of *Davidia* sent to Kew aroused the interest of British nurserymen. These specimens had been collected by Dr Augustine Henry, a Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs officer at Ichang, the port just downstream from the Yangtze Gorges. Dr Henry wrote,



“*Davidia* is worth any amount of money ... *Davidia* is wonderful.” Daniel Oliver who described the plant in *Hooker’s Icones Plantarum* was unusually excited, “*Davidia* is a tree almost deserving a special mission to Western China with a view to its introduction to European gardens.”

Fortunately, Sir Harry Veitch of The Exotic Nursery, James Veitch & Sons, Chelsea also believed this to be the case and he sent E.H. Wilson on his first collecting trip in China with the clear instruction, “The object of the journey is to collect a quantity of seeds of a plant the name of which is known to us [*Davidia*] – do not dissipate time, energy, or money on anything else”. (The secrecy

was due to the commercial rivalry in introducing new Chinese plants to the temperate gardens of Europe).

Davidia is rare in the wild so Wilson visited Dr Henry, then in Yunnan, and was given instructions as to where to find the tree from which the specimens had been collected more than ten years previous. As he wrote in *Aristocrats of the Garden* (1926): "... I took a cross-country road and on the afternoon of the 25th [April 1900] reached the hamlet of Ma-huang-po and the house where Dr. Henry had stayed when he found the *Davidia* tree on May 17, 1888. Did the people remember Dr. Henry? Did they know the K'ung-tung (local name of *Davidia*)? To these and similar questions they pleasantly answered in the affirmative. Would someone guide me to the tree? Certainly! We sallied forth, I in the highest of spirits. After walking about two miles we came to a house rather new in appearance. Nearby was the stump of Henry's *Davidia*. The tree had been cut down a year before and the trunk and branches formed the beams and posts of the house! I did not sleep during the night of April 25, 1900."

Some weeks later, Wilson "... suddenly happened upon a *Davidia* tree in full flower! It was about fifty feet tall, in outline pyramidal, and with its wealth of blossoms was more beautiful than words can portray." Wilson returned in November of that year to collect

seed, which were sent to the United Kingdom. He had been lucky in that on all his subsequent trips to China he never again found a *Davidia* fruiting so abundantly. The seed took over a year to germinate – only seed planted outside and subjected to frost germinated – and in due course Wilson and an assistant potted up more than 13,000 young seedlings. Plants were advertised for sale in the Veitch catalogue of 1903.

Certainly *Davidia* is worth growing as it is a handsome tree with dark green, glossy leaves. The young leaves are reported to be strongly scented. The outstanding feature is the extraordinary bracts, like freshly-laundered white handkerchiefs, which enclose a chocolate-brown ball, about 2 cm in diameter, of small male flowers surrounding a single female flower. One of the best descriptions of the plant is that of Wilson in *Aristocrats of the Garden*, "The distinctive beauty of *Davidia* is in the two snow-white connate bracts which subtend the flower proper. They are always unequal in size, the larger usually six inches [15 cm] long by three inches [7.5 cm] broad, and the smaller three and one half inches by two and one half inches ... At first greenish, they become pure white as the flowers mature and change to brown with age. The flowers and their attendant bracts are pendulous on fairly long stalks, and when stirred by the slightest breeze they resemble huge butterflies or small doves hovering

amongst the trees." "...I am convinced that *Davidia involucrata* is the most interesting and most beautiful of all trees which grow in the north-temperate regions."

Davidia seems not that common in New Zealand. I know of a good specimen at Government House, Epsom, and of plants in Taranaki and Dunedin. One drawback is that it can take at least ten years before it

flowers but the wait is worth it.

There are two *Davidia* trees in the Auckland Botanic Gardens: according to Emma Bodley, the older, which now flowers well, was planted in the Spring Blossom Valley in 1991. The other in the Magnolia Garden.

Ross Ferguson
Photographs by Jack Hobbs



Captain Cook and others - New books in the Library

James Cook: the voyages. William Frame with Laura Walker. The British Library, 2018

Captain Cook and the Pacific: art exploration & empire. John McAleer and Nigel Rigby. Yale and the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, 2017

Navigators and naturalists: French exploration of New Zealand and the South Seas (1769-1824). Michael Lee. Bateman, 2018.

The Endeavour left Plymouth on 16 August 1768 with New Zealand being first sighted on 6 October 1769. As expected, a number of books have recently been published to mark the 250-year anniversary. Several of these have been bought for the Library as Cook's first voyage is the beginning of the Western scientific exploration of the New Zealand flora. The books are not strictly botanical but instead general accounts of Cook's voyages. However, they complement more botanical works such as *Joseph Banks' Florilegium* described in the last Newsletter.

Last year the British Library in London presented an exhibition *James Cook: the voyages* and published the book of the same title. I visited the exhibition last May and spent a good, if exhausting, three hours excited by the wealth of material. To

me, the high points were the non-botanical, anthropological works of Sydney Parkinson, his partly completed watercolour of *Ipomoea indica* (interesting to compare the finished plate in the *Florilegium*) and the drawings by Tupaia, a high priest from Tahiti who accompanied Cook to New Zealand. A number of Tupaia's drawings have recently been unequivocally identified: the best known shows the bartering between a Maori offering a monster crayfish and Joseph Banks with what appears to be a rather inadequate piece of cloth. This is the only known image of Banks in New Zealand. The book is a good guide to the exhibition with at least a hundred images reproduced, even if most are topographic or anthropological and are not of natural history subjects. Overall, it is an illustrated summary of Cook's three great voyages to the Pacific.

Captain Cook and the Pacific is a very different book. Although it has a good, if brief, summary of Cook's three voyages, it instead "attempts to chart the history of Britain's engagement with the people and places of the Pacific ... through a specific collection of objects and images." "Each chapter introduces readers to different aspects of, and examples from, the unrivalled collection of Cook-

related material held at Greenwich: oil paintings, prints and drawings, navigational instruments, globes, charts and maps, ship plans, rare books and manuscripts, coins and medals, ethnographic material and personal effects." It is particularly good in putting Cook's voyages into historical perspective: the rise of Britain as a maritime power and the advancement of science and the increase of knowledge.

Two other books relating to Cook are worth reading although neither is in the Library. *Picturing the Pacific: Joseph Banks and the shipboard artists of Cook and Flinders*. James Taylor, Adlard Coles, 2018. This has a fine series of illustrations and stresses the importance of Joseph Banks in encouraging the participation of professional artists and naturalists aboard British ships exploring the Pacific.

Resolution by A.N. Wilson, Atlantic Books, 2016, is a novel centred on Georg[e] Forster son of Reinhold Forster who accompanied Cook on his second voyage to the Pacific. Forster senior was a difficult, tactless

man whose "lust for knowledge was a twofold thing, everlastingly co-existent with the pleasure of putting another in the wrong". Son Georg was the scientific illustrator. Only eighteen years old, he was severely repressed by his father: "While nearly every man aboard the *Resolution* bathed in the blue water and many of them gambolled with the island beauties, nakedly and uninhibited, Georg had sat with his thick woollen stockings, buckled shoes, cotton shirt, worsted vest and coat, drawing the Tahitian flora." According to his father, "We need more drawings of those plantains – you can swim any time of your life – you might never see those plants again!" Poor Georg.

The accomplishments of Cook have tended to overshadow the contributions of French explorers to the Pacific such as Jean de Surville, Marion Dufresne and Dumont d'Urville. Michael Lee is better known to most of us as a local body politician but he did a masterate in biological sciences at Auckland and has long had an interest in the role of French navigators and naturalists in the exploration of New Zealand. His book, *Navigators and Naturalists*, indicates the strong desire of the French to compete with Britain in the Pacific. Once again, plants are a relatively minor part of the story, but I found fascinating the first descriptions of iconic trees such as the kauri and the pohutukawa. The Library has on display one of



the plates from *Atlas Botanique, Voyage de l'Astrolabe*, the account

of d'Urville's explorations. This was donated by Miss Joan Dingley.

Ross Ferguson

A visit to the tundra

In July 2018 I was privileged to visit the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen, part of the Svalbard archipelago and just below the polar ice cap which was at 80° 9' North in late July. This is the tundra, a treeless landscape although "tree" species are represented by three species of *Salix* and by *Betula nana*.

At Longyearbyen (pop. 2300) the permafrost thaws to a depth of a metre or more in summer allowing a brief window for plant growth dominated by grasses, mosses, lichens and mushrooms seldom achieving a height over 10 cm. The flora comprises about 160 vascular species, 380 mosses and 600 lichens.

The most common flowering plants in the boggy parts of the tundra were the Arctic cotton grass *Eriophorum scheuchzeri* and bog saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculis* while most of the plants in flower preferred piled-up gravel on the side of the road, obviously scree-type alpenes. Among these were mouse ear *Cerastium arcticum*, Svalbard poppy *Papaver dahlianum*, alpine bistort *Polygonum viviparum* and mountain sorrel *Oxyria digyna*.

Longyearbyen is home to the Global (or Doomsday) Seed Vault a long-term seed storage facility sunk into the side of a hill (and not open to visitors). Established in 2008 and run by the Norwegian Government and Global Co-operative Diversity Trust the site was selected as being less vulnerable to natural or man-made disasters than other genebanks.

Our only other stop was at Ny Ålesund. "the world's northernmost settlement" at 79° North. With a permanent population of just 35 this is a research settlement, housing the polar research facilities of ten countries, managed by the Kings Bay Co. for the Norwegian Government. Here we were not allowed to walk on the tundra due to scientific instruments and nesting arctic terns. There were far fewer plants in flower than at Longyearbyen but the tapestry of colours was quite amazing with areas of rich emerald-green growth due to guano deposits.

The only polar bears sighted were stuffed but I did manage an early morning encounter with an Arctic fox at Ny Ålesund.

Graham Robertson



Left hand side: *Saxifraga hirculus*, bog saxifrage; *Papaver dahlianum*, Svalbard poppy; *Oxyria digyna*, mountain sorrel.
 Right hand side: *Cerastrium arcticum*, mouse ear; *Eriophorum scheuchzeri*, Arctic cotton grass.



Eucomis Photo: Jack Hobbs



Auckland Botanic Gardens: botanic.gardens@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Friends: friendsofabg@gmail.com