

The Auckland Garden

Newsletter of the Auckland Botanic Gardens and Friends

December 2021





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**Contributions to the
newsletter are welcome**
Material for the March 2022
issue should be submitted by
3 p.m. Friday 18 February
2022 to the Editor
ross.ferguson@
plantandfood.co.nz

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Images
Front cover:
Araucaria araucana (monkey
puzzle tree)
Opposite page:
Clockwise from top left
Euphorbia glauca, kaka
beak (*Clianthus puniceus*),
Hydrangea 'Miss Belgium'
and centre:
Dahlia 'Beeline II'

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Jack's update

Our dedicated team of gardeners, apprentices and collection curators have done a marvellous job getting the Gardens back into shape since returning on 6 September after five weeks away during Level 4 lockdown.

When Level 3 Step 2 commenced on Wednesday 10 November, the visitor centre Huakaiwaka opened for the first time since Level 4 lockdown commenced on Wednesday 18 August. Mich and her team worked very hard in preparation for opening, including making sure safety precautions are in place to keep the team safe.

Our nursery team of Doug Ward, Owen Newson and Melveen Sam have also done a remarkable job of getting production numbers on track given staff shortages and the disruption of lockdowns. Shelley Small and Lenny van Heugten both helped out in the nursery while the visitor centre was closed, something the nursery team greatly appreciated. To date they have produced 36,000 kānuka and mānuka for the regional parks revegetation programme, very close to the original target.

Dr Keith Hammett has kindly donated a collection of species dahlias. Keith and I both collected species some 30 years ago, and at one stage

we had the most comprehensive collection in the country. It is exciting to resurrect at least partially this collection as many are intrinsically beautiful, and it is also an important conservation project as if they are lost it is doubtful we could ever get them again.

There are lots of displays to look forward to in our plant collections and gardens. Keith Hammett's 'Beeline II' dahlias have been planted along Pōhutukawa Walk for summer display. This novel seed strain was most impressive when trialed last summer.

The Edible Garden is always interesting and attractive, with an exciting array of summer vegetables and edible flowers planted. The fence and archways donated by the Friends that enclose the Culinary Courtyard have been stained and are looking great.

The pathway renewals in the Camellia Garden have finally been completed, and the Magnolia



Collection pathways are now being upgraded.

The Sculpture in the Gardens Organising Committee has had a challenging time adjusting plans for the next exhibition in response to changing COVID restrictions. The start date has been delayed by a few weeks, and while we still hope to hold an opening in December this will be confirmed once we know what restrictions apply at the time. All footings for sculptures were installed in October, and we are continuing with the installation of artworks irrespective of official opening dates.

Cheryl Wright is curating the indoor exhibition in the visitor centre Huakaiwaka. Already some superb artworks have been installed, perfect for anyone looking to buy something special for Christmas. For those unable to visit, an online gallery will be available to view all these artworks.

For the outdoor exhibition we will encourage use of the Sculpture Trail Guides and online trail information to assist with self-guided walks. There will also be a fun children's trail to provide activity for all the family to enjoy.

Beau Timberland resigned from the Collection Curator Rose role with his final day being Friday 29 October.

Fortunately, we had an ideal

replacement in Joanna Mason who commenced in the role on Monday 1 November. Joanna previously excelled as a gardener in our Amenity Team where she looked after the Pacific Pathway plantings and was involved with the plant trial programme.

We were all disappointed when Karah Lockman also resigned from her apprenticeship to return to the USA.

When Graeme Platt passed away on 1 October the Gardens lost one of our greatest contributors, not to mention one of our most colourful personalities. Over the past 40 years he was a major influence as an advisor and donor of plants, and he was a major influence on how I thought about plants and gardens.

Graeme's funeral was held on Saturday 13 November at North Shore Memorial Park (Schnapper Rock). I was grateful to be asked by his wife Rosemary to speak about Graeme's immense contribution to the Gardens. In my address I asked everyone to imagine they were visiting the Garden as follows:

Driving from Auckland to visit the Gardens the first vegetation you encounter is the native plantings alongside the Southern Motorway. Most of these were obtained from Graeme including the beautiful kōwhai (*Sophora fulvida*) selected in Piha.

Having driven through our main entrance you encounter a large traffic island bed mass planted with *Coprosma propinqua* var. *martinii* 'Taiko', a wonderful groundcover that he introduced from the Chatham Islands. From the carpark you walk towards the visitor centre Huakaiwaka where three large Chatham Islands nikau donated by Graeme are silhouetted in front of the prominent concrete wall.

You walk out of the visitor centre atrium into the sunshine and notice on your right a large spreading *Metrosideros excelsa* 'Firestone', one of his pohūtukawa selections from the Coromandel, in a raised planter. Beneath this tree grows *Arthropodium cirratum* 'Downtown' (marketed as Avalanche) that Graeme and I selected from mass plantings in downtown Auckland. In the sunken garden in front of Café Miko kids are playing beneath another of our selections, the bright-red flowered pohūtukawa, 'Plus Four'.

Looking northwards towards the lake numerous pohūtukawa are scattered across the lawn, all cultivars selected by Graeme including some of the very best in cultivation such as the outstanding 'Titirangi'.

From the visitor centre you stroll down our Pohūtukawa Walk flanked by an impressive avenue of the upright pohūtukawa 'Vibrance' which is smothered in flower as Christmas approaches and stops

visitors in their tracks.

Continuing along the Pacific Pathway you intermittently encounter nodes where the pathway widens with a central garden. The most prominent trees in each of these nodes are pōhutukawa, again all Graeme's selections that he donated. Many other Platt introductions visible from the walkway include his beautiful white mānuka 'Karekare', *Pittosporum roimata*, *Coprosma* 'Hawera', and coastal maire (*Nestegis apetala*), to name a few.

On reaching the end of the pathway you walk past the Rose Garden into the Gondwana Arboretum, our largest collection in area stretching right across to the Southern Motorway. Graeme donated the majority of the *Agathis* and *Araucaria* trees in this collection, many of them obtained during his many visits to Australia, the Pacific Islands and South America.

On your return journey to the visitor centre you will discover many other Platt introductions in our Native Plant Identification Trail and Native Plant Ideas Garden.

Jeff Jones created a beautiful and thoughtfully composed wreath for the coffin which was greatly appreciated by Rosemary and her family. Jeff utilised mainly plants introduced by Graeme, with a central *Araucaria* cone representing his heart surrounded by sprigs of Rosemary.

Other aspects of Graeme's contribution are covered elsewhere in this Newsletter, but I hope this

conveys the unmissable impact his plants make on our landscape today.

Jack Hobbs

Araucaria bidwillii and *A. cunninghamii* in the Gondwana Arboretum



Visitor centre welcoming visitors again

The latest lockdown has certainly been challenging for our Visitor Services Team with the centre closed and on-site engagement brought to a standstill for such a long time. The team rose to the challenge and turned their efforts to engaging with our visitors through social media and newsletters. We all felt bereft about not being in the Gardens during spring which is such a beautiful time and one that fills us all with good cheer. Both visitors and

staff provided imagery to keep us entertained and enlightened by the joyous flush of blossom and colour.

We hosted around 45,000 local visitors per month in August and September during Alert Level 4. Opening up the main gates at Level 3 step 1 just as the *Prunus* 'Awanui' blossoms were at their peak drew even bigger crowds with over 100,000 visitors in October. It was important for the field team to be

able to work to support the visitor increase and ensure weeds did not become the main feature. We congratulate them for their efforts to bring the garden presentation back up to where it should be.

We opened the visitor centre on Wednesday, 10 November at Level 3 step 2 ahead of the new traffic light COVID-19 management system. Services and requirements currently are:

General:

- Face coverings to be worn.
- Contact tracing for visitors available with manual registration and QR code at each door entry.
- 2 m physical distancing.

Visitor Centre:

- Open for up to 50 visitors.
- Contactless payment.
- Wheelchair hire only (no mobility scooters to negate close contact at Level 3).
- Kids' space closed to keep visitors flowing.
- Gallery closed in preparation for Sculpture in the Gardens.

Volunteers:

Volunteer activity returned in Step 2 based on return-to-work plans managed by Paul Swift.

Buildings:

Logan Campbell building, Friends building & outdoor hire sites: Open under Ministry of Health guidelines with limited numbers.

Growing Friends Plant Sales:
Recommence late November under Ministry of Health guidelines.

Library:
Opening delayed

Wiri Rambler:
Remains closed until a review of the criteria within traffic light system can be undertaken.

Café Miko:
In Step 2 they are open with limited contactless service for take-away food and drink. In Step 3 they will open the café with limited seating to comply with Ministry of Health guidelines.

Sculpture in the Gardens:
Kim Stretton (exhibition manager), the organising committee, the Gardens team, contractors and artists have worked extremely hard to modify the exhibition to meet Ministry of Health guidelines and bring this fabulous exhibition to our visitors this summer. Installation has begun and some may have noticed the groundworks commencing and signage popping up as we prepare to install the outdoor works. Cheryl Wright is curating the indoor exhibition this season and we are already seeing some great small works coming to the centre. With Christmas coming there will be some great gift options available so don't forget to come and support the exhibition when it is launched. There will also be an online gallery of

all the art works so anyone can view them if unable to visit. On site we encourage use of the Sculpture Trail Guides and online trail information to assist with self-guided walks. There will also be the fun children's trail to provide activity for all the family to enjoy. We believe Sculpture in the

Gardens will be a popular attraction for Aucklanders this summer so plan your visit well and consider off peak times to enjoy a walk along the trail. For more information go to the Sculpture in the Gardens website www.sculptureinthegardens.nz.

Mich Newton

Amenity affairs

After more than a month away from the Gardens owing to the recent lockdown the field team was relieved to return to our work "home", following the change down to Alert Level 3. Even the flowering cherries and kōwhai seemed happy to see us, putting on one of the strongest floral displays we've seen in recent memory. The tuis have been out in force as well, with no shortage of food sources available to them around the Gardens.

I guess we had all hoped for a more settled year this year after what transpired in 2020, when COVID-19 first appeared. Unfortunately the arrival of the Delta strain has meant that we have had to adjust our way of working in the field. Both the collections team and amenity teams have been split into two separate bubbles, each looking after a different half of the Gardens.

been pleasantly surprised as to how well the garden areas have fared in our absence, and how well they have recovered since we returned. In the first couple of weeks we focussed on a "weeding blitz" to get the gardens back up to a reasonable standard. We have also been focussing on pruning the hydrangeas that are emerging from their winter hibernation. Next on the "to-do" list is to get garden beds mulched and we will also look at getting camellia pruning underway. Mulching is a key task at this time of year as it retains moisture in the soil before the summer months, helping to keep the plants healthy and well hydrated. This summer is certainly looking like another bumper one, with another Sculpture in the Gardens exhibition on the way. We hope that reduced alert levels will enable visitors to enjoy the exhibition and the rest of the Gardens uninhibited.

Despite the long time away we have

Shaun Rice

Shining social media stars in the making

Thanks to the sterling and generous efforts of the garden staff, the Gardens did a fine job of keeping Aucklanders in touch with our plants and gardening during the “long lockdown”.

A big thanks to Andrea Wright who got the ball rolling, and to Paul Swift who kept it rolling. Andrea had been scheduled to deliver our first onsite drop and learn since March 2020 on hydrangea pruning. It was meant to take place during what became the first week of lockdown. Not wanting to miss the pruning window, Andrea filmed and demonstrated how to prune hydrangeas on specimens in her own garden on the Hauraki plains. Paul edited the video and there are reports that several hydrangeas across the isthmus are now looking the better for the online tutorial.

Other Gardens staff followed in Andrea’s footsteps with videos from Jack on sowing seeds, Jeff Jones introduced the new Mānuka Garden and gave some sage advice on looking after your houseplants, Shelley Small spoke about the glorious *Prunus* in her garden, Mark Fielder took a tour of his subtropicals at home, Pippa Lucas and Karah Lockman gave a lesson on “tip pruning” *Gaura lindheimeri*, and Angela Anstis explained why you should grow *Nepenthes* in your

bathroom. Barbara Wheeler began filming a weekly series of botanical observations from the world within walking district of her seaside abode in Maraetai. It was a great pleasure to see the botanical world through her eyes. Under the moniker of the Curious Curator Barbara gave us short tours through the aerial roots of pōhutukawa, acclaimed the loveliness of karo flowers (*Pittosporum crassifolium*), explained the spreading suckers of Coral Trees (*Erythrina*), and introduced an abundance of other plants encountered on her wanderings.

A final note: A photo of the sun rising over the central lawn, published to mark the equinox at 7.21 a.m. on 23 September, hit some sort of Facebook algorithm jackpot and became our most popular post of all time. So, while other parts of Auckland Council saw a decrease in their online engagement, we found the opposite. People love the Auckland Botanic Gardens and find comfort and cheer among the blooms and beauty of the gardens, even when that can only happen in the digital sphere.

Hope you are all in fine fettle,

Greg Meylan,
Social Media Content Coordinator.

President's report

COVID-19 lockdown restrictions seem to have sent everyone's plans into disarray. Events that we were all looking forward to have been either cancelled or postponed – often more than once. Hard work done by members has been overturned by events, for example, the Spring Bus Trip and the Growing Friends plant sales, the cancellation of the Friends Art Group exhibition and the Wiri Rambler being off the road – all very disappointing. Executive Committee meetings have again been held “virtually-via-email” which has worked but is not as effective as being able to meet as a group and engage in discussion. The Library Management Group has not been able to meet and will get together again in the new year. Fortunately there was no urgent business to be dealt with and requests for book purchases will be held over. The AGM has been deferred four times (see note in this newsletter) but somehow we have all coped.

I want to offer my sincere thanks to all those who have managed the changes and kept the business of the Friends on track and running smoothly.

The Organising Committee for Sculpture in the Gardens decided to defer the opening of the exhibition and to reconsider events related

to the show in light of COVID-19 restrictions – working on a “better safe than sorry” basis. The exhibition has the usual exciting collection of works by artists whose work we know well and a group of artists new to the show. The indoor gallery show promises to be as interesting and exciting as ever under new Curator, Cheryl Wright.

Volunteer programmes have also been on hold. Thanks to Paul Swift, Education & Partnerships Specialist, for keeping the volunteer groups up-to-date and informed with his weekly Volunteer Update and for managing the Health and Safety requirements that must be met before volunteering can start again – a huge task! I, for one, have missed my sessions in the library and with the Growing Friends and I'm sure all other volunteers will have missed their regular connection with friends and colleagues and the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Gardens.

However, if there is a bright side it is that my own garden has had more than the usual amount of attention while other options for activity have been closed off. The warm, wet spring has meant an extraordinary amount of growth, cherry blossom and roses flowering as I have never experienced before, more broad beans that I will ever be able to eat

and salad greens burgeoning. Even my seed-grown tomato plants are flowering – in mid-November – promising a bumper crop. I’m sure I’m not unique in this – if the news is to be believed, home gardening has become the new normal – long may

it last!

Best wishes everyone, for a happy Christmas and a great new year with, we all hope, life back to some kind of normal.

Liz Powell

Friends membership subscriptions

As members have not been able to access the Visitor Centre over the period of Level 3 lockdown to renew membership subscriptions by cash or eftpos which was an option offered in the September newsletter, it has been decided to further extend the time to pay to 18 January. Members not financial after this date will be considered to have resigned and will no longer receive the Newsletter.

Payment may also be made by direct deposit (ASB 123011 0757619 00). Please put your name on the bank transfer and indicate that this is a membership renewal.

Subscriptions:	
Individual	\$25.00
Family/Partner	\$30.00
Student	\$10.00
Affiliate Group	\$30.00

Friends 2021 AGM

Owing to the uncertainty of COVID-19 lockdown level changes the Friends 38th AGM has been deferred a number of times. It will now be held at 2.00 p.m. on Saturday, 22 January, 2022 in the Friends Building. The programme and agenda are as set out in the

September Newsletter along with the minutes of the 2020 meeting.

For catering purposes, if you are attending, please RSVP by 12 January to friendsofabg@gmail.com or by leaving a message at the Visitor Centre, ph 09 267 1457.

Thank you.

Graeme Platt remembered

14 November 1941 – 1 October 2021

When the inimitable Graeme Platt recently passed away, we lost one of the greatest contributors to the Gardens, a larger-than-life character who left an indelible mark.

I first encountered Graeme about 40 years ago when I was put in charge of our native plant collections. At the time Platt's native plant nursery in Albany was the only source of a wide range of quality native plants in Auckland, or anywhere in the country for that matter, so naturally I headed there to check it out.

Graeme certainly made an indelible impression on me during those first few visits. I remember him holding court in the retail area, regaling customers with the wonderful qualities of the plants he had on sale, and where and how to plant them. People were transfixed, as was I. At that stage I was completely in awe of Graeme, but as I got to know him better I realised he was in fact a warm humorous man lurking behind the bravado.

During my early visits Graeme introduced me to numerous plants I had not encountered, and consequently most of these ended up in our collections at the Gardens.

His views covered many topics and often seemed radical at the time. I recall him telling me that traditional nursery hygiene practices were detrimental to the health of plants, and the filthier his nursery became the healthier the plants became. Although I would express it differently, essentially it is philosophically the same approach we practise at the Gardens where we avoid spraying and do all we can to promote an abundance of life in our garden ecosystems.

As our friendship grew, I was fortunate to go on many plant hunting adventures with Graeme. We scoured much of Auckland and Northland looking for treasures and visiting beautiful and interesting places. I was always astounded at his ability to spot plants, often from a great distance and from a fast-moving vehicle.

In 1993 he invited me to join him and Rosemary in China. It was apparent that our hosts from the Guangxi Botanical Institute held him in the highest esteem. Once they offered Graeme a collection of 22 species of yellow- and golden-flowered camellias. My heart sank when Graeme declined, saying he was not interested in camellias. We visited some remote villages where the locals had seen few if any people

of European descent. All eyes were on Graeme as he strode ahead, his long locks and beard flowing, while Rosemary and I trudged behind feeling almost invisible.

During the nineties I became increasingly concerned about the regular use of insecticides and fungicides on our roses, a viewpoint strongly supported by Graeme. When I was appointed manager of the Gardens in 1997, my efforts to reduce spraying resulted in strong resistance and often acrimonious debate. At times things became very heated and personal, and I will always be grateful to Graeme for his steadfast support during this difficult time. Graeme had the ability to say things in public that I could not, and he did this forcefully and effectively. His advocacy significantly influenced political and public support for our cause, and we finally stopped spraying altogether about twenty years ago. Pleasingly, this holistic approach to gardening that we now call “sustainable horticulture” is becoming increasingly mainstream.

In January this year Graeme phoned me to say he remembered seeing mānuka in full flower in summer on Awhitu Peninsular and asked if I would go on another hunting trip with him. With his usual incisive thinking he worked out that these summer-flowering mānuka would be of huge benefit to the mānuka honey industry as January is a time when honey bees are very active but most

mānuka have finished flowering.

Our mutual friend Fiona McDonald joined us and off we went. Well, I can honestly say we drove nearly every road on the peninsular looking for this elusive colony. Finally, we decided we were out of luck, and hatched an alternative plan to check out the true native puha (*Sonchus kirkii*) at Kariotahi. We decided to drive there via a back road “just in case”, and to our great good fortune we came across the very patch of manuka we had been looking for in full bloom. A great day was completed when later we also found the puha.

My very last outing with Graeme was in May this year when we went to Glendowie Park to view several maturing specimens of the critically threatened rātā moehau or Barlett’s rātā (*Metrosideros bartlettii*). Graeme had donated these many years ago, having collected seed from wild specimens growing at Waititi Landing in the far north. He was clearly very proud to see this important threatened tree flourishing.

Some of my fondest memories are of my trips with Graeme. They were always hugely entertaining, with Graeme constantly expounding his opinions and drinking coke. His theories were always alternative, covering a diversity of topics including “Why dinosaurs became extinct”, “The cause of cabbage tree decline”, “Why kauri dieback occurs”, “Why

some plants develop red foliage”, “How to make diamonds” and lots more. There were many late-night calls from Graeme excited about his latest epiphany. If the phone rang after 10 p.m, it was invariably Graeme, and I knew I would not be getting to bed for a few hours.

He was certainly strongly opinioned, and it is fair to say at times he could prove difficult to be with. Somehow, however, we always resolved our differences.

Most recently we fell out after disagreeing on whether palms should be included in our Gondwana Arboretum. After not speaking for several months, we met at a mutual friend’s funeral, gave each other a hug, and we never spoke about palms in the arboretum again.

Probably my most important learning from Graeme was to question everything, and to consider all alternative possibilities before arriving at conclusions and solutions. Graeme certainly looked at things quite differently from most people. Although his ideas and innovations were initially resisted by many academics and industry people, ultimately many became adopted as mainstream. I can clearly remember the sceptics decrying Graeme’s attempts to develop alternative potting mixes, believing that peat would never be replaced. Initially he tried waste products such as sawdust and then pine bark before settling on the latter, and today of course bark is a major ingredient of modern potting mixes and underpins a sizable industry.



Graeme's other great plant passion was Araucariaceae, that primeval family of magnificent trees such as kauri and other *Agathis* and *Araucaria* that out-survived the dinosaurs. He made many trips to Australia, the Pacific islands and South America to study these and collect germplasm. He also scoured kauri forests for the best genetic specimens. In a famous

episode of *Country Calendar* he was filmed collecting kauri seed while suspended from a helicopter, then flying Gandalf-like through the air when it took off.

Graeme loved the Gardens, and he has left a legacy that will endure for the benefit of generations of visitors to come.

Jack Hobbs

Next photographic competition

April 2022 to February 2023

There is no firm theme yet for the next biennial photographic competition but a suggestion is that it needs to reflect the moods of the Auckland Botanic Gardens and that photographs be identifiable as having been taken in the Gardens. A theme could be "Capturing the mood of the Gardens". Criteria will be set soon and may include people using the Gardens, early morning light or a specific season as each

one brings its own mood. The dates for the competition will provide opportunities to reflect Autumn Colours, Winter Starkness, Spring Surprise, Summer Glory.

These are early days but it is essential to keep photography in the forefront of your minds. Watch out for a further notice in the next newsletter.

Dianne Glenn
ONZM, JP, Life Member of the Friends of
the Auckland Botanic Gardens

Friends Preview cancelled

Sculpture in the Gardens is due to open 11 December, but this year we won't be holding a Friends Preview. We apologise as this is normally a very popular evening! We will look to hold an alternative function early next

year should Covid-19 restrictions allow. We know you will still enjoy this varied and exciting exhibition.

See www.sculptureinthegardens.nz for up-to-date information.

Latest news from the Friends Art Group

Well, what a disrupted year we have had, with our last four meetings cancelled. Our usual end-of-year November meeting with shared morning tea with our trading table of small works, cards, not-needed art supplies and equipment will now kick-start our meetings next year. Surely by then we will all be able to meet in person!

Our exhibition "Medicine, Myth and Magic", which was scheduled for October, has been postponed until next year, which was a disappointment, but on a positive note, gives us (or should I say, me?) more time to complete a few paintings for it. I spent hours down various internet "rabbit holes" reading up on various incredible plant-based potions for even more unbelievable medical complaints which left me with little time to actually paint but immensely grateful I live in this era, albeit overwhelmed with COVID.

It has been very disappointing to miss out on our bi-monthly artist visits, but I am delighted to say that Sue Wickison, who was due to visit in October, has kindly agreed to give her talk and demonstration at our February meeting instead. Definitely one for the diary!

As I sat here wondering what

on earth to write about for this newsletter I decided to ask members of the group what they had been up to during the lockdown.

It turns out that members have been busy with artistic projects and have kindly shared their creative endeavours. Taking online art courses, working on exhibits for next year's art exhibition or running workshops have been keeping their creative minds busy. Here are a few comments I received from members who were happy to share:

Claire Broughton has been working on her *Eucalyptus cinerea* for the next exhibition and Jan Barker says, "I finished this (Vireyas) a few weeks ago but it still needs a varnish which will not be for a few months. Friends are fascinated that I can switch from a tiny 00 brush to large acrylic brushes to paint on a large canvas. I try to keep it botanical and, of course, I get to do a background which is fun and do not have to use magnifying glasses. The background colours I took from cushions!"

Other members have been upskilling:

Theresa Manson says, "I've been taking Anna Mason's online watercolour art course for a few weeks. I've found it very meditative in these stressful times..... Art is

so good for the mental health.” I couldn’t agree more.

And other members have been teaching or setting up classes for next year.

Jennifer Duval-Smith has been coming to grips with delivering online nature journaling workshops and Margaret Routen says, “As for me I have bitten the bullet and enlisted to teach ‘Beginners Pastels’ at Uxbridge next term.”

On a sad note, I was informed that botanical artist Brent McGuire died after a long illness. Brent was a brilliant botanical artist, working in colour pencil and won a Royal Horticultural Society Silver Medal

in London in 2014. Although I didn’t know him, many of our members took classes with him at Nathan Homestead and remember his classes fondly.

If you would like to be part of our friendly, supportive group, we would love to have you join us. We meet the last Saturday of each month from 9.30 to 12.30ish, all welcome - beginners and more experienced alike. Why not come along to our first meeting of 2022 on 29 January to see who we are and what we get up to!

If you would like to know more, get in contact with me, Lesley Alexander on 021 161 7070 or at lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com

Growing Friends report

The Growing Friends have started back at the nursery and are spending two weeks tidying and potting to start public sales again on 25 November.

We have to thank Doug and his staff for keeping our stock alive and for weeding it the week before we returned. We have a good range

of perennials in stock, and our propagation bench is brimming with an amazing range of rooted cuttings which will soon be potted and on sale.

We look forward to seeing our old, and some new, friends soon.

Bronwen Rowse

Beef and vegetable soup

Dianne Glenn's version

David Glenn, an "independent" witness, says this is his favourite soup. It was definitely also a favourite amongst those at the last Soup Day.

Ingredients

- 5 Beef Shin Bones – good meaty ones
- 1 large onion
- 3 Oxo cubes or 1 Tbsp Maggi Beef Stock
- Boiling water to cover
- 1 cup dried soup mix (unseasoned)
- 2 medium sized potatoes-peeled and grated
- Pumpkin/butternut/buttercup to match potato, grated
- 2 large carrots, grated
- ½ leek (cut lengthwise with coarse green top removed), sliced
- Extra Oxo/Maggi beef stock to adjust seasoning

Method

1. In a slow-cooker, set on "high", place the beef shin bones and sliced onion
2. Cover with boiling water
3. Add the oxo/beef stock dissolved in a little boiling water.
4. Cover and cook on high for about

2-3 hours until meat half cooked.

5. Add the dried soup mix. Cover and cook about 2 hours until meat can be removed from the bones.
6. Remove beef bones, set aside to cool. Remove all bones and gristle.
7. Cut beef into bite size cubes. Place back in pot and cook until meat is tender.
8. At this stage, all may be tipped into a larger saucepan/stockpot for a larger quantity.
9. Add grated potato, pumpkin, carrot and sliced leek. Add boiling water to cover.
10. Simmer until vegetables cooked, taste, and add more oxo cubes or beef stock to taste.

Notes:

- The soup taken to the Friends Soup Day had oxtail stock (from cooking oxtails for a casserole, removing oxtail bones and leaving most of the stock) in which I then cooked the beef soup bones.
- Other vegetables can be used including kūmara but I always use pumpkin to sweeten.
- I cook on high for soup, most times but it can be cooked on low but takes all day.

Summer seasonal activities

Summer has arrived with daily temperatures increasing and lots of visitors picnicking and enjoying the Gardens. With daily visitor numbers increasing since the vehicle gates opened it has been wonderful to hear praise from new visitors as well as our regular visitors.

It is a busy time with plenty of gardening tasks to get your garden looking good for the summer.

Add colour to your garden by planting heat-loving annuals such as sunflowers, *Begonia*, *Zinnia*, French marigolds, *Salvia* and *Celosia*. Our summer displays feature Keith Hammett's 'Beeline II' dahlias, *Gomphrena* 'Bicolour Rose', *Gaura* 'Whirling Butterflies', *Canna* 'Gabriel' and *Ageratum houstonianum*. These plants are drought-tolerant and once established require little maintenance.

In the Edible Garden courtyard Angela has dedicated two beds to a "pasta" theme, planting them with a dwarf tomato (Patio hybrid), basil, chives and rosemary. The Walled Garden has been planted with heat-loving aubergines, chillies, capsicums, zinnias and basil. These are planted alongside the existing perennials and brambles such as raspberry, boysenberry and thornless blackberry. Other edibles planted

for the summer include beetroot ('Chioggia' and 'Bull's Blood'), *Amaranthus* 'Mekong Red', an early potato ('Nadine'), carrots and the highly recommended zucchini 'Black Coral', which has started fruiting and will continue to produce until March. Essential plant care over summer includes understanding the different water requirements of your plants. In general, we suggest watering plants first thing in the morning while the weather is cool so that the water evaporates quickly as temperatures rise, thereby reducing the risk of diseases. If you cannot water in the morning, it is fine to do it in the evening too. Water deeply and this will keep the plant happy for a few days. Mulching will help retain moisture so apply in copious amounts. Stake plants before they get too tall and wide to handle. Remove dead plant material and thin over-crowded garden beds to ensure good airflow is maintained.

Roses will be at their peak flowering time so deadhead them to encourage repeat flowering. Our dedicated and wonderful rose deadheading volunteers are back helping new Rose Collection Curator Joanna Mason (pictured) deadhead the roses until late March. Also deadhead perennials such as *Penstemon*, *Ageratum*, *Dahlia*, *Scabiosa*, *Achillea*, *Coreopsis* and

other daisies for repeat flowering until autumn.

Prune spring-flowering shrubs once they have finished flowering. Remove old flowering stems or cut them back to a strong side shoot or healthy bud. Spring-flowering shrubs such as *Forsythia*, *Deutzia* and *Philadelphus* produce most of their flowers on the new young growths made the previous summer or autumn.

Mere Brewer



Romneya

I must admit I am a sucker for any flower with white or ivory white petals surrounding a central boss of golden stamens. A white single rose, a white single paeony, a white Higo camellia, a white cistus, a *Gordonia* or *Schima* – I like them all. But for me, the ultimate in perfection is the flower of *Romneya*, the Californian tree poppy, the Matilija poppy, sometimes rather insultingly called the poached egg or fried egg plant. There are two species, *R. coulteri* and *R. trichocalyx*, but the differences between the species are seemingly minor.

The photograph of *R.* 'White Cloud' on the back cover of this issue of the newsletter was taken by Jack Hobbs. Jack says that, unsurprisingly, it was the plant that seemed to attract

most attention when he opened his garden last November for the Hospice Garden Ramble. This cultivar is reported to be a hybrid between the two species.

The plant stands one or two metres high with attractive but rather sparse silvery-green foliage. It is the flower that is the attraction. Up to 13 cm across with pure white petals, folded, crinkly like delicate crepe paper. The ovary and the stamens are bright gold, but the crowning touch of class is the deep maroon circle around the ovary at the base of the encircling stamens. Often the petals are dusted with the abundant golden pollen.

Romneya is a poppy and to me the finest of all poppies, even better than

the fabled Himalayan blue poppy, *Meconopsis betonicifolia*. I am probably biased because whereas *M. betonicifolia* is reluctant to grow, let alone flower, in Auckland, *Romneya* can do well under our conditions once it is established. The main problem is that it is difficult to propagate and the seed require exposure to fire before breaking dormancy, I have forgotten where I obtained my plant but Jack says his came from Denis Hughes of Blue Mountain Nurseries.

I have at home a print of *Romneya* by Hilda Wiseman, an Auckland artist who was active mainly in the first half of last century. Against a pinkish blue background she catches the opening delicate petals at dawn with the stamens modestly half-covered by one petal. The print is inscribed "The

flower opens it wings". Perhaps a bit twee but it does catch the ethereal unworldliness of the flower.

This fragile beauty is misleading. *Romneya* comes from the Californian and Mexican drylands and is accordingly one tough plant. It is hardy and once established is there for good. It can be aggressive, not content to stay where it was planted. Suckering shoots may suddenly appear up to six metres away from the original plant. They may not be where you want them but are too good to remove.

Romneya is not listed as being in the Botanic Gardens. I would love to see a large expanding clump, possibly in the rockery by the lake. It would look tremendous. Jack tells me he is working on it.

Ross Ferguson

Lovely leucadendrons

Leucadendrons are great ornamental plants for year-round garden interest. The colourful bracts and cones add texture and vibrance to the garden and are fantastic as long-lasting cut flowers. They are frost and drought tolerant once established, and thrive in exposed full-sun sites. They require well-drained soils low in phosphates and don't need fertilising as they have specialised root systems.

Leucadendron is the second largest genus of the Proteaceae family. There are 84 species, although two are now extinct and another two have unresolved conservation status. In the wild they are mainly found in the Western and Southern Cape regions of South Africa. Leucadendrons are dioecious and have male and female flowers produced on different plants. These appear as cones with colourful bracts at the top of the stem. Female

cones are generally larger and fatter than the male cones.

Pollination occurs via insects and in some cases wind. In the wild, male flowers open first and fade last. Female plants flower for a short time at the peak of male flowering to ensure there is plenty of pollen around for fertilisation. The bracts and styles are small and insignificant, but they become enlarged and flush brilliant yellow during the flowering period. Leucadendrons usually grow in large dense stands so when peak flowering occurs in winter and spring, the fynbos glows with large patches of yellow which is highly visible and attractive to insects, thereby helping ensure cross pollination. Seeds are stored in a hard woody cone: they are released and subsequently germinate after a fire. Fire is a common natural occurrence in South Africa and many fynbos plants have adaptations that help them regenerate and survive after fires.

There are many cultivars that look good in gardens and are also popular as commercial cut flowers. *Leucadendron salignum* with its

red/crimson tones and *L. laureolum* with yellow/gold tones are the main parent plants for many cultivars. Some New Zealanders have been successful leucadendron plant breeders, including Jack Hobbs. Jack bred the popular *Leucadendron* 'Amy', named after his daughter. Other New Zealand cultivars include *L.* 'Safari Sunset', *L.* 'Safari Goldstrike', *L.* 'Safari Sunshine', *L.* 'Bell's Sunrise', *L.* 'Bell's Supreme', *L.* 'Cream Delight', *L.* 'Incisum', *L.* 'Julie', *L.* 'Pisa' and *L.* 'Red Gem'. Some of my favourites include *L.* 'Plum Supreme', *L. strobilinum* 'Waterlily' and *L.* 'Fireglow'.

Come and check out the leucadendrons that we have growing in the African Plants Garden. They are sure to brighten up your day.

Andrea Wright

References:

The Protea Book, A Guide to Cultivated Proteaceae by Lewis J. Matthews. (Canterbury University Press, 2002)

Protea by Colin Paterson-Jones, (Struik Publishers, 2007)

Corrigendum

Blame Lockdown! A late glitch in the preparation of the last Newsletter resulted in a line being left out in the second-to last paragraph on page 22 of Jack's Update. Apologies. The paragraph should have read:

Professor Jameson considers New Zealand regulations on this technology are back at the turn of the century and that we are out on a limb amongst first world countries. She concluded with the statement, "Legislation and fear may mean New Zealand joins Europe as the death place of agricultural innovations".

Banksia or *Banksia* - country or plant?

Sir Joseph Banks died in 1820, and was buried at Lincoln. His will stipulated that he be buried without ceremony and that no monument be raised to his memory. Nevertheless, almost two centuries later, a memorial was raised: a stone tablet above one of the entrances at the western end of the nave of Lincoln Cathedral. The tablet was unveiled by the Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, a recognition of the important part that Banks played in the colonisation of Australia.

Banks has sometimes been described as the father of Australia, and his portrait appeared on the Australian \$5 notes between 1967 and 1992. He was a strong supporter of the colonisation of New South Wales and he recommended Botany Bay as a site for a penal colony. He advised the British Government on Australia and he corresponded with the first three Governors. In contrast to his limited involvement with New Zealand, only during Captain Cook's first voyage here, Banks remained active in Australian affairs for most of his life.

Linnaeus writing to John Ellis in 1771 suggested, "The new-found country ought to be named BANKSIA, from its discoverer, as America was from Americus." Banksia would then have become one of the few countries

of the world named after a person. Not surprisingly, the idea never took on. Terra australis had long been used for the postulated southern continent. The name Australia was first used officially by a Governor in 1817, and it was formally adopted by the British Admiralty in 1824.

Linnaeus became increasingly frustrated by the delays of Banks and Dr Daniel Solander to publish the results of their botanical explorations. It was left to Linnaeus' son, Carolus Linnaeus f. (f. for filius is used by botanists to distinguish the son from the father) to honour Banks by naming for him the genus *Banksia* in his *Supplementum Plantarum systematis vegetabilium* of 1782 (1781 on the title page). The generic name *Banksia* had earlier been used by the naturalists Reinhold and George Forster, father and son, who accompanied Cook on his second voyage. They applied the name to a genus of New Zealand plants (now *Pimelea*) but the name was mistakenly abandoned. Three other authors also named genera in honour of Banks. The use of *Banksia* in its present sense was formally conserved in 1940, meaning that, in this case, the normal rule of priority was not followed.

The first specimens of *Banksia* to be collected by European scientists

were those of Banks and Solander from around Botany Bay, just south of what is now Sydney, in 1770 during Cook's first voyage to the Pacific. They collected four species now called *B. serrata*, *B. integrifolia*, *B. ericifolia* and *B. robur*. Further north, they also collected *B. dentata*. The first to be described by Linnaeus f. was *B. serrata*. The watercolour by John Frederick Nodder, based on the preparatory drawing of Sydney Parkinson, was the basis of the splendid engraving of *B. serrata* in Bank's *Florilegium*.

The delay of more than 200 years in seeing Bank's *Florilegium* through to

Figure: Sir Joseph Banks. Lithograph by William Daniell, 1811, after George Dance, 1803. Photo: Plant & Food Research.



full publication in colour has received much attention. The story of the *Florilegium* is undoubtedly romantic, but it is unfair to recall only Banks' failures – he otherwise achieved so much. He was a senior figure, the senior figure, in British science, he became *de facto* director of Kew during its rapid extension, he was adviser to the Government and the King, he was President of the Royal Society for more than 40 years. His stature is shown by his honours, including a baronetcy, appointment as a Knight Companion of the Bath, and appointment to the Privy Council.

The genus *Banksia* is a member of the family Proteaceae and contains about 180 species and numerous varieties and subspecies with their very characteristic inflorescences and seedheads. There are three *Banksia* taxa in the Auckland Botanic Gardens: *B. ericifolia* in the Rock Garden, the cultivar *B. 'Lemon Delicious'*, an interspecific hybrid, also in the Rock Garden, and *B. robur* in the Peace Garden. It is striking that two of these taxa, *B. ericifolia* and *B. robur*, were amongst the first of the genus to be collected by Banks and Solander two-and-a-half centuries ago.

The popular *Rosa banksiae*, with its beautiful, pale yellow flowers, is not named for Sir Joseph but for his wife, Dorothea Lady Banks.

Ross Ferguson

Conservation guidelines

In September I attended the Australasian Seed Science Conference which had a fantastic online program with speakers from around the world. One of the highlights of the conference was the one-day workshop that discussed the tools and techniques for plant conservation and the launch of the Germplasm Guidelines. Germplasm refers to any part of the plant that can be stored or used to grow new plants. These guidelines are like a bible for conservation practitioners with chapters on seed storage, *ex situ* conservation, importance of records and propagation protocols. We contributed to the review of these guidelines as well as a case study on dealing with threatened plant *ex situ* conservation in the face of plant pathogens. The full paper was published in the journal *Australasian Plant Conservation* (Stanley, R. and Bodley, E. (2020) Strings Attached: Managing *ex situ* plants highly susceptible to pathogens. *Australasian Plant Conservation* 29(2), 20-23). Several recent *ex situ* projects at the Gardens have highlighted some complexities of this approach when a plant is threatened by an invasive pathogen. For managers of wild sites, where threatened plants are declining owing to pathogens, removing plants and/or germplasm to the safety of an *ex situ* provider such as a

nursery or a botanic garden is a well-established response in threatened plant recovery management. For a recipient nursery, the opportunity to participate in threatened plant recovery is a tangible way to demonstrate a clear role in plant conservation and a rewarding way for staff to contribute to a recovery project. However, care must be taken if the subject plant is host to a devastating environmental pathogen which may infect other crops on site, put collections at risk or adversely affect other projects undertaken on site.

Although the guidelines have an Australian focus with a number of New Zealand case studies, there is a lot we can learn from the guidelines to apply to conservation in New Zealand. Australia is ahead with the seed banking of their flora and valuing the role of botanic gardens in plant conservation, which helps us to advocate for our role within New Zealand.

Emma Bodley

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Images

- Opposite page, clockwise from top:
- Vernal equinox. sunrise through the trees on the Central Lawn
 - *Hydrangea* 'Blauer Prinz'
 - *Hydrangea* 'Libelle'





Romneya
Photo: Jack Hobbs



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