

# The Auckland Garden

Newsletter of the Auckland Botanic Gardens and Friends

June 2021



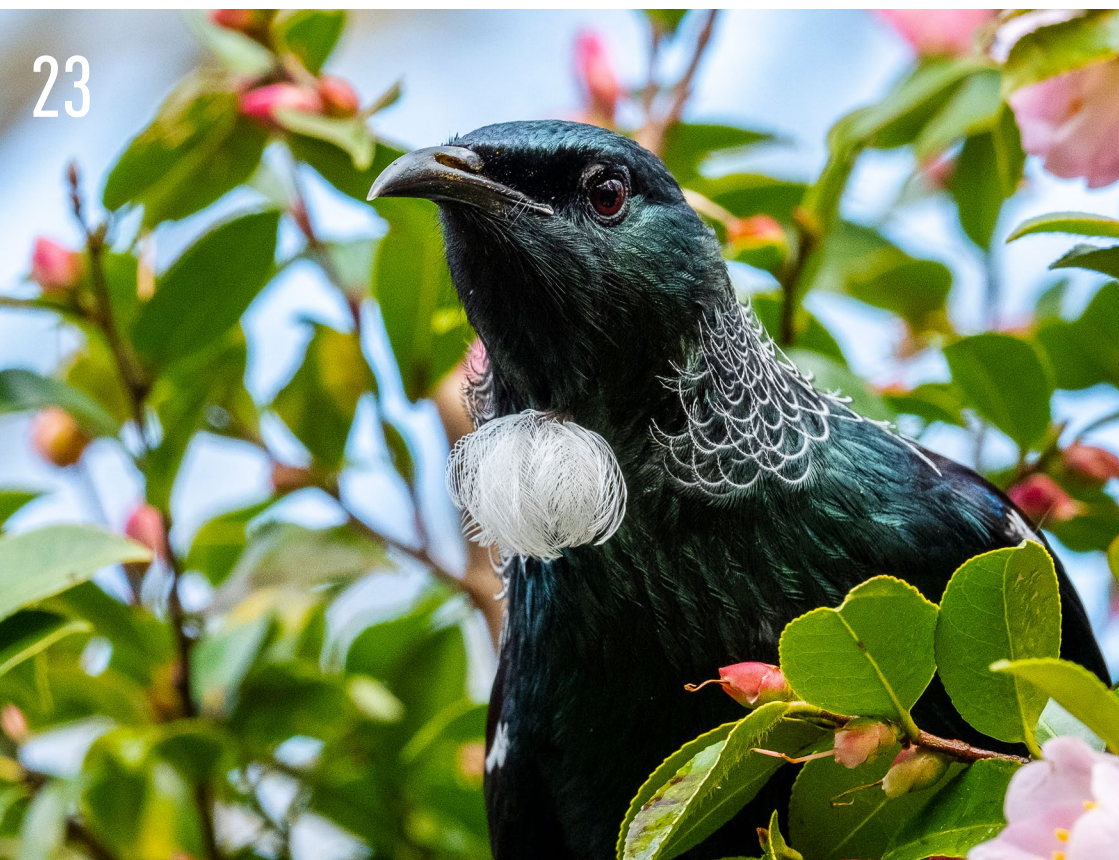
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Auckland  
Botanic Gardens  
102 Hill Road,  
Manurewa,  
Auckland, 2105

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**Contributions to the newsletter are welcome**  
Material for the September 2021 issue should be submitted by 3 p.m. Friday 13 August 2021 to the Editor [ross.ferguson@plantandfood.co.nz](mailto:ross.ferguson@plantandfood.co.nz)

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### Images

Front cover:  
NZ Post's \$2.70 stamp featuring Sarah Featon's *Corynocarpus laevigatus* Copyright NZ Post 2021.

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: *Rosa* Green with Envy, silk floss tree (*Ceiba speciosa*) and Friends Photographic Competition Best overall Adult photograph - Paul Glenton's *Loving Spring's Blossoms*.

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# Jack's update

It has been a time of significant change with the recent departure of two of our esteemed colleagues, Bec Stanley and Julia Watson.

Bec joined the Gardens staff in 2012 as Senior Gardener Education and Partnerships, although our paths had crossed many years earlier when she assisted us with planning the Threatened Native Plant Garden in the late nineties. In 2013 Bec was appointed Curator, and she certainly made this role her own by applying her extensive knowledge and connections to revitalise our contribution in key areas vital to

a modern botanic garden. Our conservation work in tandem with Emma Bodley has reached new heights, and our research programme is well ahead of that delivered by most botanic gardens of our scale. Some of Bec's other achievements are included in her article further in this Newsletter. Her contribution to the Gardens is immense, challenging norms and continuously driving improvements. It is some consolation that Bec has moved to another part of Council as Principal Advisor: Conservation Partnerships in the Natural Environment team, a role I know she will excel in.



Julia Watson replaced Bec in the Senior Gardener Education and Partnerships role and also made it her own, applying her considerable expertise and passion for community engagement to deliver great outcomes. I particularly admired how Julia always remained calm and smiling no matter how busy things became. Julia and Mich became a formidable combination, developing strong partnerships and taking our visitor engagement and experience programmes to new heights. She also formed a strong relationship with our large pool of volunteers, and many expressed heartfelt sadness when her departure was announced. The good news is Julia has not gone too far, taking on a new role as



Volunteering and Programmes Team leader in Community Parks.

Several staff recently attended the NZ Gardens Trust conference in Christchurch thanks to generous support from the Friends. We were all very grateful for this opportunity as it would not have happened without this support. Articles from this conference and the gardens we visited will appear in the next few issues of *The Auckland Garden*. In this issue, Jeff Jones writes about Broadfield, a wonderful large garden featuring some of the best displays of native plants I have encountered. Joanna Mason covers Flaxmere, the

renowned North Canterbury garden of Penny Zino.

A highlight of the conference for me was the Royal NZ Institute of Horticulture (RNZIH) awards evening where our own Liz Powell and Ross Ferguson were recognized for their contributions to horticulture.

Liz was announced as a Fellow of the RNZIH, her citation including her immense contribution to the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens Executive Committee and as a volunteer. Also mentioned was her steadfast support for Sculpture in the Gardens and the Visiting Artist programme. The Botanic Gardens staff hold Liz in the very highest regard and are delighted she received this prestigious recognition. A fuller account of her contributions appears elsewhere in this issue.

At the same ceremony it was announced that Dr Ross Ferguson had received the Award in Garden History. Ross is, of course, well known to the Friends, having edited *The Auckland Garden* since 2017 and serving for many years on the executive.

Ross had already become an Associate of Honour of the RNZIH in 1998. He has twice presented the prestigious Banks Memorial Lecture on topics of horticultural history. I well remember his lecture in 2008 on "Sir Joseph Banks and the transfer of crop plants" where his

insight into the introduction of new crops by Joseph Banks was brought alive by weaving together historical events and their social implications. Equally fascinating was his 2019 lecture “The domestication and successful commercialisation of kiwifruit” in which Ross detailed the story of one of our most important horticultural export crops. The economic success of green and especially gold kiwifruit can be attributed to the commitment and expertise of a few dedicated individuals, with Ross one of the most prominent. It made for a fascinating tale in which the stars were modest scientists who worked selflessly for the greater good.



I am particularly delighted that Ross has received this recognition given he has nominated so many others for awards over the years. He is not one to actively seek recognition, but it is certainly well deserved.

The Edible Garden continues to flourish under the enthusiastic care of Angela Anstis. A timber fence has been erected around three sides of the Culinary Courtyard, complemented by two impressive new archways and a gate donated by the Friends.

The Chris Moore sculpture *Entwined* that was purchased at the last Sculpture in the Gardens has now been relocated to the open area just north of Native Plant Ideas. This site will become the new home of our ornamental manuka collection which is being shaded out in its current location.

The rātā Moehau (Bartlett's rātā, *Metrosideros bartlettii*) Emma Bodley wrote about in the last issue were returned to their home in the Far North on 1 April. Before the plants departed, Ngati Kuri representatives came to the Gardens to give a karakia written specifically for rātā Moehau. Emma has formed a strong relationship with Ngati Kuri and deserves great credit for all the technical expertise and passion she has put into this important conservation project. Our dedicated nursery team also deserve recognition for successfully



propagating these plants since the project started in April 2015.

A couple of trees warranting mention for their star autumn performance are the silk floss tree (*Ceiba speciosa*) and tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*). The silk floss tree is a spectacular sight in our Rock Garden when covered in large pink blooms. It is also known as the “monkey-no-climb” tree for the sharp spines that adorn the trunk.

Tupelo is one of few deciduous trees to reliably produce intensely coloured autumn foliage in Auckland. This moisture-loving tree is too large for home gardens but one of the best for parks and wherever space allows. The two trees planted in 1983 by the lake edge near the Rock Garden colour quite differently, one turning mainly yellowish shades while the other assumes deep reddish hues.

Many salvias also excel in autumn, with one of the most impressive being the tall, yellow-flowered

*Salvia madrensis*. We imported this splendid species some 40 years ago from Southwestern Native Seeds based in Tucson, Arizona, and it has been one of the mainstays of our Perennial Garden ever since.

Jack Hobbs



## Farewell from Bec

It is a very bittersweet thing to be leaving the Gardens. I am not just leaving a job but the network of Friends, colleagues (both here and at other Gardens in New Zealand and overseas), volunteers and regular

visitors. But it's time for me to pursue some new challenges in the city as part of the Natural Environment team of the Auckland Council. (I also avoid the daily commute).

My first experience of the Gardens (as a non-Aucklander) was in 1997 when I was invited by Jack and Steve Benham to be involved in the establishment of the Threatened Native Plant Garden. At that time there were fields over the road, which seems hard to believe now. It was amazing to be able to get a job here in 2012 in Mich's team in the Partnerships & Education role, and then become Curator in 2013. To that point I had usually been the one person at my workplace who advocated the value of plants. Here I was at a place where everyone's job was connecting people to the value of plants. I couldn't believe my luck.

There are many projects I am very proud to have led or helped shape: the review of the trials so that we publish the results of at least two of them each year; getting permission from EPA (Environmental Protection Authority) to import all the *Agathis* species to New Zealand; collating and publishing the Plant Collection Guidelines; being part of research collaborations like the International Plant Sentinel Network (which resulted in us being nominated for an MPI (Ministry for Primary Industries) Biosecurity award for the biosecurity trail); running an annual lab for two Auckland University courses; signing a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Conservation; getting the nursery certified for hygiene/biosecurity; and leading the New Zealand BGANZ (Botanic Gardens Australia and New

Zealand) network for six years.

I have also really enjoyed being part of the Gardens leadership team. Jack ensures we are all involved in how things work here, and I have learned so much from that experience. We also have lots of laughs which makes the challenges manageable.

I have also had the very best opportunities provided by the Friends including travelling to Europe funded by the Buchanan Award, Australia several times, as well as numerous trips to see gardens and attend meetings and conferences in New Zealand. I can honestly say these have all been things that have kept me working here for longer. It has also been wonderful to get to know the Friends who are here on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Having my final year marked by lockdowns has been very strange. I usually mark each day by what's on and which volunteers and visitors I see. Sometimes I only realize it's Thursday when I see a Growing Friend. Weeks of COVID Level 3, on my own in the office, seemed to pass very slowly.

No one day here is the same. Working in a public place means we can all be drawn into anything from dogs, weddings, toilets, water leaks, motorbikes, power cuts (one lasted for three months and we had a generator powering the library and office), burglaries, lost people – to closing the Gardens for the first time



in its history. I believe my problem solving and negotiation skills have immeasurably improved. I've even had a peacock and a rabbit inside my office! Both are surprisingly difficult to catch by hand. I know I won't have quite the same stories to tell my friends and family in my new job. I'll enjoy being a Gardens visitor

in the future. I am looking forward to noticing changes, which being caught up in the day-to-day tasks of my job I don't think I really see. It will be great to watch where the next Curator takes the Gardens. I am sure they will enjoy this job as much as I have.

Bec Stanley

## Bright new face

Ashleen Prasad is the bright new face who recently joined our visitor services team. She was drawn to the role as the Gardens are a great place to learn about plants, and it fits well with the double degree in environmental and biological sciences she is currently undertaking at the University of Auckland.

So far Ashleen is really enjoying her customer-facing role, and she especially appreciates being able to ask so many questions of her knowledgeable colleagues.

Ashleen was already familiar with the Gardens through regular walks in our native forest with her Dad, and from visiting on university field trips to complete assignments. Ultimately, she aspires to a role researching freshwater streams and lakes, possibly with Auckland Council. In the meantime, she

hopes to remain at the Gardens for some time, a sentiment shared by her colleagues who love her warm, bubbly personality.

Jack Hobbs



# New Curator

I am pleased to announce that our new Curator will be the irrepressible Barbara Wheeler, a well-known figure in the New Zealand botanic garden scene who has worked in public and botanic gardens for 31 years. This includes overseas stints at the Royal Horticultural Society Garden Wisley (UK), Tresco Abbey Gardens (UK), The Morton Arboretum (Chicago), and Longwood Gardens (Pennsylvania). Most of her career has been spent at Dunedin Botanic Gardens where she has been Plant Collections Supervisor since 2002. Recently she was elected to the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture Executive Committee.

In 2019 Barbara was one of just six people around the world accepted into the Longwood Fellows Programme, a 13-month leadership development programme. She returned from that programme last year ready for a new career challenge and we are fortunate she has chosen this opportunity at the Gardens.

Barbara made a strong impression speaking at the recent New Zealand Gardens Trust where she spoke at the conference dinner and also as a keynote speaker on the topic of public garden leadership.

We have known Barbara for many years and are delighted she is joining our team. Quite apart from her vast experience detailed above, she is a great personality who is always a pleasure to be around.

Jack Hobbs



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Acknowledgement: Most of the photographs in this issue were taken by Jack Hobbs.

# From the President

It has been very pleasing that owing to our Level 1 lockdown status Friends activities for the first half of the year have returned to normal. We have enjoyed the Growing Friends participation in the Ayrlires Plant Fair and their regular sales, the autumn bus trip to Taitua Arboretum and Hamilton Gardens, the Wiri Rambler back on the road, and the successful Photographic Competition. The Sculpture in the Gardens Artists Working Day enabled the selected artists to choose their sites and meet each other, the Organising Committee, the Curatorial Panel, the engineers who advise on the safe placement and installation of works and many members of the Gardens staff. At the Library Volunteers Morning Tea we were pleased to have a chance to thank Roger Price and recognize his very long support and commitment to the library. The Staff Appreciation Morning Tea gave the Executive Committee an opportunity to show off their culinary skills and thank the Gardens staff on behalf of the Friends members for the wonderful work they do in the development and maintenance of this prime gift to Auckland.

The next event for Friends to look forward to (COVID-19 willing!) is our annual mid-winter Soup Day on 25 July – details and booking slip in this newsletter.

A lunch for volunteers to farewell Julia Watson, Education and Partnerships Coordinator, was both a happy and sad occasion. We congratulate Julia on her appointment to a new role in Council, but she will be missed by the many Friends members and members of the public with whom she has worked in her time at the Gardens.

Another popular and respected staff member farewelled recently following her move to a new role in Council was Bec Stanley. Congratulations Bec. We will miss you both and wish you the very best in your new positions.

Congratulations, too, to Dr Ross Ferguson, Executive Committee member and Newsletter Editor on his award from the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (RNZIH). At its recent AGM Ross was awarded the Award in Garden History. Ross has a long association with the RNZIH, has served as Vice President and became an Associate of Honour in 1998. He is a valued member of the Friends Committee and we all enjoy his work as Newsletter Editor.

In consultation with Gardens Management the Friends have made a submission to the Auckland Council's Ten Year Budget requesting funding for the completion of the Pacific



Pathway and for the development of a traditional Maori Garden, in line with the Botanic Gardens Master Plan. The intention of the Maori Garden is to work in partnership with Mana Whenua to showcase and preserve pre-colonial economic plants and cultural practices. This would become a major attraction and educational resource. A decision from the Council should be known at the end of June.

A reminder that membership subscriptions are due and the payment details are included in this newsletter. Please note that banks are no longer accepting cheques, so all payments will need to be made

either by cash or eftpos at the Visitor Centre or on-line.

We were delighted at our May Executive meeting to welcome Stella Cattle as a co-opted member. Stella has had a long association with the committee as a representative of the Manurewa Local Board. Her experience will make her a great asset.

My thanks to the members of the Friends Committee and Friends members for your work and support, in particular to those who have coordinated our recent activities. We look forward to continuing success and further events for us to enjoy.

Liz Powell

## Sue Davison, a true Friend of the Gardens

Sue's first visit to the Gardens was when Tom Pearce turned the first sod in February 1973. It was a dairy farm in those days, and her daughter Anna ran around picking up cow pats and saying "Here Mummy". No afternoon tea for them!

Sue's involvement with the Gardens predates the purchase of the Nathan property for the purpose of developing the Gardens. When she was working as a technician at DSIR (Department of Scientific and Industrial Research) in 1964 she



recalls Joan Dingley, Ted Chamberlain and Jim Hunter loading spades and boots into a car to test the site for its suitability for a botanic garden. Their report back to the Manager of Parks, Phil Jew, was obviously positive.

Early memories of the Gardens include big beds of cannas, and overseas visitors being intrigued by sheep grazing around the Rock Garden.

Sue is without doubt the longest serving volunteer at the Gardens, having started three years before the opening of the Gardens in 1982. A Technical Advisory Committee (1978–1981) had been established with representatives from various groups including nurserymen, University of Auckland, the Museum, the Auckland branch of RNZIH, the Council's Parks Department and others. This committee met quarterly to help plan for the Gardens' development prior to the opening in 1982.

Sue represented the Auckland branch of RNZIH, their members being enthusiastic supporters of the Gardens in the years leading to the opening. The newly appointed Manager, a shy Brian Buchanan, was introduced by Phil Jew. He soon found support, especially from plant lovers such as Jean Veal, Joan Dingley and Joy Amos. The branch hosted several spring visits to the Gardens before they were opened and many members came to look at

new plantings, discuss planned ones and talk plants. Brian enjoyed the company, valued most of the advice and made many firm friends.

Sue began volunteering in the Visitor Centre in about 1982 when Joan Dingley did the roster and wanted only volunteers who were plant experts. This proved too restrictive, so the requirement was later relaxed and more volunteers joined the team.

When the Library opened in 1992 Roger Price asked Sue to take on both the Library and Visitor Centre reception rosters. Library work has been a favourite, with one of her tasks being indexing many of the journals.

The first-ever Friends plant sale was divisions of perennials that the three J's (Joan Dingley, Joy Amos and Jean Veal) cut into clumps and sold at Soup Day. Plants were also sold at Sunday Rambles.

Although not initially involved with the Growing Friends, Sue took over when someone quit just before a big spring sale and left the group with an untidy nursery. Bronwen Rowse spent two Saturday afternoons with Sue tidying and re-organizing it before the sale which was very successful. Later, Graeme Hauer, with his building skills, made significant changes. She enjoys working with the current team saying, "we're all mates out here".

Sue's fondest memories include David Attenborough launching his *Private Lives of Plants* book and television series in the mid-nineties. The Friends helped with the launch and Sue recalls how friendly he was and how he made a point of mingling.

Another celebrity she remembers is David Bellamy, the "Botanic Man" who attended the official opening ceremony for the Gardens, and who returned some years later to speak to the Friends at their Soup Day.

Sue felt privileged to meet Chris Brickell, the Director General of the Royal Horticultural Society, and his wife when he gave a talk at the Gardens at very short notice. The phrase "down to earth" seems appropriate for all three men.

Sue has less fond memories of the infamous khat (*Catha edulis*) episode. We had plants of this small tree in our carpark border, presuming they were edible given their specific name. Visitors reported men pulling off branches when she was working in the Visitor Centre and she went to investigate. Her enquiries with someone connected to the Somalian community revealed that after khat-chewing sessions men sometimes become aggressive, developing stomach problems and rotten teeth. We quickly removed the trees. Later khat was classified as a Class C drug.

Sue was a foundation member of the Friends, later joining the Executive.

She found committee work very enjoyable, especially getting to know so many knowledgeable people who were so willing to share that knowledge. She regards Trevor Davies, George Rainey and Gwen Bull as loyal supporters of the Friends. Rod Bieleski was another who made a large contribution and, of course, Terry Hatch and Pam deserve a special mention.

Another volunteer contribution by Sue was acting as secretary of the NZ Gardens Trust for about five years when it first started. Liz Morrow was the Executive Officer, and Bev McConnell and Gordon Collier were the garden assessors. Andrew Maloy, a good horticulturist, was also on the committee, and subsequently played a major role in starting the Young Horticulturist of the Year competition. It was always a pleasure working with these people and she wonders why so many horticulturists are such nice people, but she concedes there are a few ratbags too.

Sue thinks the volunteer system at the Gardens works very well today and gives much credit to Julia Watson who "will be difficult to replace". She considers it a privilege to have known so many other outstanding staff over the years, making special mention of Yvonne Baker's enthusiasm and Steve Benham's wisdom.

Jack Hobbs



# Congratulations Liz

Congratulations to our President, Mrs Liz Powell, who was recently elected a Fellow of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture. Fellowship of the Institute is for “members who have made a significant contribution to horticulture by their activities or interest in or service to horticulture”.

Liz has been a leading member of the Friends Executive Committee for the past twenty years and is currently in her second term as President. She has been involved in many of the Friends and Botanic Gardens activities including:

- volunteering in the Rambles Programme;
- volunteering in the Botanic Gardens Library and being currently Chair of the Library Management Group;
- being a member of the Growing Friends;
- organising the annual Friends Soup Day as well as the catering of many Friends functions;
- organizing many of the Friends bus trips.

She has been an enthusiastic supporter of the biennial exhibition, Sculpture in the Gardens, which is now one of the most important and popular public exhibitions of sculpture in New Zealand. She has fostered the Visiting Artist programme which is run in alternate years to Sculpture



in the Gardens. She is a member of the Friends Art Group and was one of the co-organisers of the New Zealand contribution to the Botanical Art Worldwide exhibition in 2018. These various exhibitions bring many additional visitors to the Garden. She has been unwavering in her support for staff development resulting in many staff undertaking overseas and domestic travel to attend conferences and spend time at leading public gardens.

In 2010, the citation for her Life Membership of the Friends stated, "As President, Liz led by example: she is well organised, focussed and meticulous, determined and sees things through to completion. She is not scared of hard work, she leads from in front, not from behind."

It is really pleasing that her many contributions to horticulture in the widest sense are now recognised nationally, particularly her continuing contributions to the promotion and development of the Auckland Botanic Gardens.

Ross Ferguson and Jack Hobbs

## Friends membership subscriptions

Membership subscriptions for the Friends 2021/22 financial year are now due. For those members who hold individual, partner, student or affiliate memberships a renewal form is included in this Newsletter. Members who joined within the last two months will have their

subscription carried over into the new financial year.

Subscriptions can be paid either by eftpos or cash at the Visitor Centre or by direct deposit ASB 123011 0757619 00. Please put your name on the bank transfer and indicate that this is a membership renewal. Please note that cheques can no longer be used as a means of payment.



### 2021 AGM advance notice

The 2021 AGM of the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens will be held in the Friends Building on Saturday, 25 September.

This year we have decided to trial a different format with the meeting starting at 2.00 p.m., followed by

a talk at 3.00 p.m., then drinks and nibbles, concluding about 5.30 p.m.

It has become evident that members were not keen on the traditional arrangement of a late afternoon meeting, followed by dinner and the talk which meant a finish late in the evening.

Details of the AGM arrangements will be included in the September Newsletter.

# Growing Friends report

Along with the rest of the nursery industry we are experiencing a sales boom, which is attributed to an increasing investment by people in their home environment, as they enjoy living locally. We are working hard to maintain our stock level and have had considerable help from the garden and nursery staff.

We have new blue flags for our gate posts on sale days and they look rather good.

We have no Sunday sales for winter so they will begin again on 5 September.

It would be great to gain some new members for our team. We meet on Thursdays 9.00 a.m. to noon and the first Sunday of the month 9.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. It is expected that members attend 40% of the time. Pop into our nursery for a look around and a chat to see if you are interested.

Bronwen Rowse

## Orchid books donated to the Library

A fine collection of orchid books has been bequeathed to the Library by the late Alf Day.

Mr Day was a well-known and much respected member of the orchid community. He was a member of the New Zealand Orchid Society from 1952 and was a foundation member of the South Auckland Orchid Society. He was Patron of the Howick and South Auckland Orchid Societies and a past President (1985–1988) of the New Zealand Orchid Society. He received a Gold Medal from the Society in 1990. In 2006 he was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for

services to horticulture.

He imported plants and was a keen hybridiser, concentrating mainly on *xOdontioda*. In 2010 he received the Plant Raisers' Medal of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture for his achievements in orchid breeding.

Alf was a regular visitor to the Gardens over many years, particularly during orchid shows. He was a fund of information and his warm personality and enthusiasm made him a favourite with staff.

Jack Hobbs and Ross Ferguson



# John Edgar 1950 - 2021

"It's a difficult task to teach a stone to talk. But if you listen carefully you might just catch a word or two."

John Edgar, 2006.

If anybody could get a stone to talk, it would undoubtedly have been John Edgar. He certainly could understand what a stone was saying or was wanting to say. He was one of New Zealand's leading sculptors, occasionally working in glass or copper, but specialising in stone. Although he originally trained in science he spent more than 40 years exhibiting his works as a sculptor. He was appointed an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the New Year Honours of 2009 for his services to art, in particular sculpture.

John did complete some larger scale works, such as those in the Domain, but he was noted above all for his exquisite small works in stone,

immaculately completed with him undertaking all steps in the process. Especially pleasing are his small and beautifully inset "lightstones", stones inset with glass bands. Their creation without any scratches or blemishes whatsoever required enormous technical sophistication – he was self-taught.

He participated in Sculpture in the Gardens. One of his works, *Font*, from the 2017-2018 exhibition, was purchased by the Friends. This is deceptively domestic in size and combines the raw basalt column with a finished, polished basin at the top. It is now happily sited in an enclosed space in the Edible Garden.

Until recently John lived at Karekare, and served for over 20 years as President of the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society. He was elected a life member of the Society in 2005.

Ross Ferguson



# Introducing Barbara Harvey

Barbara has recently been co-opted to the Friends Executive Committee. She writes:

As a child growing up in post war times, in the far north countryside, nurturing vegetables and fruit was a necessity rather than a hobby. Flowers were a hobby. The adults in my life were first and second generation Kiwis and so we grew the plants that had been grown in the old countries with the immediate addition of kumara and citrus. To this day, I feel nostalgia towards the old-fashioned English flowers my grandmother grew. I watched her stoop with difficulty one morning to partake of the perfume of one of her roses, “Noble thing”, she murmured upon rising.

A two-year teaching stint on Great Barrier Island in the seventies urgently reinstated my gardening knowledge. No greengrocers there. We all swapped and shared our produce or it was silverbeet and frozen peas for us.

Moving from the farm to live adjacent to the Botanical Gardens is a fortunate coincidence. The Ellerslie Flower Show had been my only prior contact. Quite some years ago, I joined the Rovers which was, by chance, the very best way to begin. A few fun years with that team familiarised me with every area of the gardens and enthused me with knowledge, the helpful spirit and growing plants zeal of the curators of the collections. Coincidentally, I was learning so much to put to use in our own garden. To me these gardens are a beacon to us all showing the way forward and back in this growing wonderland we inhabit so thoughtlessly.

Teaching, business and latterly travel and grandchildren have limited my involvement though these have now all subsided somewhat though our enjoyment of boating has not. I enjoy volunteering in the library and I will see now what I can contribute to the Friends Committee.

Barbara Harvey

## Friends Art Group

Well, although the cold weather has finally caught up with us, it's not all bad as gardens take a back seat, we now have more time for our art!

We have had a great year so far, with good numbers enjoying our monthly meetings.

Jennifer Duval-Smith, one of our members, started off our artists' demonstrations, delighting us with her love of nature journaling. We spent a lovely morning hearing all about her Artist Residency earlier in the year, before moving en masse to the Edible Garden, drawing the plants there. Many said we should journal together as a regular part of our year, perhaps document the seasons in the gardens! It's such a relaxing and enjoyable pursuit and great for beginners as there is no pressure to create that "perfect" drawing. Watch this space!

Jane Thorne was our demonstrator for April. We had to postpone her visit a few times, but it was worth the wait. Drawing beetles is her passion, and it was fascinating to hear her stories behind her work – such as using old wallpapers as her paper. Jane and her husband uncovered them as they redecorated their villa. Getting to grips with symmetry when drawing them was tricky, but Jane thankfully reminded us that artistic licence was OK too.

### What's next?

We have Brenda Hart, one of our members who was Artist in Residence before Jennifer, coming in June to talk about her jewellery making. Brenda is a very talented artist and has amazing stories to tell

about her work. I spent time with her in May this year at a printmaking workshop – run by our very own Sandra Morris at Pūkoro Mirānda Shorebird Centre, and can vouch that her talk will inspire and move you.

August sees Marie Sanders coming to visit. Marie came a couple of years ago to demonstrate her pastel work and her tips then were invaluable. It would be lovely to see more botanical work done in pastels as their powdery texture makes them well suited to blending, layering on lots of colour, and by using pastel pencils those fine details can be added. Um, must get mine out again.

I am delighted to let you know that Sue Wickison, who has recently relocated to Waiheke, will be our final art demonstrator for the year. She is booked for our October meeting and will be talking about her work over the past few years on the plants found in the Qur'ān. There is a fascinating video about the project – go to YouTube and search for [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DX24zJvTtgY&t=323s@ab\\_channel+SueWickison](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DX24zJvTtgY&t=323s@ab_channel+SueWickison)

So get your diary out and put these dates in:

June 26	Brenda Hart, jeweller
August 28	Marie Sanders, pastel artist
October 30	Sue Wickison, artist talk including Plants of the Qur'ān project

Finally, that brings me to our members exhibition in September/October time – dates still to be confirmed. Our theme this year is medicinal plants which follows on nicely from Jennifer's edible plants. Watch this space!

### "For the Love of Botanical" – an art exhibition

World Day of Botanical Art – 18 May was celebrated in New Zealand with a juried exhibition of botanical art at the Space Studio and Gallery in Whanganui this year. I was delighted to hear that 5 of our members had work selected for this major exhibition. Congratulations

go to Paula Shelley (two artworks selected), Sandra Morris (three), Jennifer Duval-Smith, Jan Barker, Claire Boughton and myself each with one artwork chosen and a former member Jenny Lee who also had three works in the exhibition.

So 12 of the 35 artworks were from artists in our group – what a fantastic achievement.

If you would like to know more about the art group, please email me on [lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com](mailto:lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com) or ph 021 161 7070 – all welcome.

Lesley Alexander

## Friends Autumn bus trip

Not only was there the common thread that the two gardens were in Hamilton but also the theme of two very different gardens which had both been established by vision and dedication.

Taitua Arboretum originated from the passion for trees and the desire to provide shade and shelter for the farm animals of John and Bunny Mortimer. From the first plantings in 1973 this "acorn" grew a great many trees, woodland gardens and picnic spots.

The Mortimers gifted the Arboretum to Hamilton City in 1997 and it is maintained by the Council. There

are some beautiful and accessible walkways around lakes, views of the farmland and places to rest and enjoy the sounds of the trees and take in the rural air. It is not far from the city centre and well worth a visit when you next visit the Waikato.

Vision is certainly evident at the Hamilton Gardens. The riverside was originally used for horticultural crops by the Ngāti Wairere chief, Haanui. The land was then used for various community purposes and later as the city rubbish dump. Hamilton Beautifying Society lobbied for a public garden in the 1950s and initially four hectares were developed.

Subsequently since 1980 the Gardens have been created to illustrate cultural meaning and context and show the story of civilization and attitudes to the new world.

It seems a perfect setting with the river alongside to provide another vista to complement the visual stunningness of the Paradise Collections. In particular the amazing and flamboyant colour carpet of the Indian Char Bagh Garden, tempered by the soothing water both within this paradise garden and beyond when looking to the river. (The volunteer gardener in me had to admire the careful weeding and dead heading of the closely planted annuals).

There is something for everyone, whether it be the English Flower Arts-and-Crafts-inspired golden afternoon garden, the peaceful refuge of the Japanese Garden of Contemplation, the opportunity to consider time in the Chinese Scholars' Garden, the unsentimental and minimalist Modernist Garden and the Italian Renaissance Garden which was closed for a wedding, but we were able to enjoy the sound of the singers.

On a more practical level the Productive Collection exhibits the range of food and useful plants and trees such as kumara, herbs and kitchen garden and includes a sustainable backyard.

If quirky is your thing, the Fantasy Collection is a must do. The Surrealist Garden is great for whimsy and imagination. If you saw the branches move, then it must be a Tron, aka biomorphic shapes that move.

Then there are the Picturesque Garden with references to Mozart's opera, *The Magic Flute*, and Masonic symbolism, the Tudor Garden suitable for masques, the Chinoiserie Garden which every aspiring lord of the manor had to have back in the 18th century, the Concept Garden which references land use maps for the layout and colour palette and acknowledges that nature is going to win, the Tropical Garden with its planting arranged so that larger plants protect smaller plants and an irrigation system for frost protection and a vertical garden containing 6,000 cells.

Last but not least is the Mansfield Garden with a mixture of exotics and natives, a tennis court and marquee set up for afternoon tea. The planting and design details have been based on *The Garden Party*, the short story by Katherine Mansfield which she wrote in 1922. There are also the Cultivar and Landscape Gardens but, unfortunately I ran out of time to wander through those.

It was a great day and thanks to Kate Moodie for organizing.

Cleone Campbell



# Friends Midwinter Soup Day

Beat the winter wet and chill by joining the Friends for Midwinter Soup Day and enjoy a delicious lunch – so much more than just soup!

This year we will have a presentation from a staff member who attended the recent NZ Gardens Trust Conference in Christchurch – from all accounts a great occasion with visits to some beautiful gardens, enjoyed by all those who attended.

So, join us for great food, good company and a fascinating talk.

## **When:**

Sunday,  
25 July 2021

## **Where:**

Friends Building,  
Botanic Gardens

## **Cost:**

\$15.00  
per person

## **Book by:**

Tuesday,  
13 July 2021

## **To Book**

Please complete and post the enclosed booking slip to:

Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens,  
102 Hill Rd, Manurewa, 2105

Payment can be made either:

- by cash or eftpos at the Visitor Centre. Please either post or leave your booking slip with the staff (no cheques thank you)
- or by direct deposit to ASB 123011 0757619 00. Please ensure your name and "Soup Day" are on the bank transfer and the booking slip is posted.

Numbers are limited. Get your booking slip in to the Friends early to be sure of a ticket. Friends members only, please.

Any questions, phone Liz Powell,  
09 6301 259.

# Photographic Competition results

Thank you to all the entrants to the competition which ran 1 December 2019 to 21 February 2021 (extended due to COVID-19). Prizegiving was held at the Auckland Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre on Saturday 27 March following an exhibition of finalists' entries for the previous two weeks. Winners received \$200 and

second placegetters received \$100.

## **Results:**

### **Gardenscape**

- 1st Robyn McKeague  
*Summer Colour*
- 2nd Devinder Singh  
*Nikau Trees*

**Creative Angles**

- 1st Sharron Hickman  
*Beautiful Rose Roundelay*
- 2nd Lord Baladad  
*Flowers from African Garden*

**Friends of Flowers**

- 1st Paul Glenton  
*Loving Spring's Blossoms*
- 2nd Joyce Yue  
*Good Morning Bumble*

**Youth**

- 1st Lilly Bartlett  
*Bumble Bee Lunch in the Morning Sun*
- 2nd Lee Glenn  
*Beehaven*

Friends Photographic Competition Junior Peoples Choice winner Abby Coates with *The Height of Beauty*



**Winner of the Rod Bielecki Cup**  
Best overall Adult photograph - Paul Glenton.

**Winner of the Friends Trophy**  
Best overall Youth photograph - Lilly Bartlett.

**The winners of the Popular Votes**  
Adult - Jiongxin Peng with *Bird Singing Among the Flowers*  
Youth - Abby Coates with *The Height of Beauty*. Each received \$50.

Thank you judge John Reece and the sponsor Life Member Bill Burrill.

We look forward to the next competition running February 2022-February 2023.

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The Friends Photographic Competition Sub-Committee has met and made the decision to hold the competition biennially, alternate years to the Sculpture in the Gardens Exhibition.

It will be February to February which provides opportunities to take photographs through the four seasons, meaning that the next competition will be February 2022-2023 and will most likely be displayed with work from the Visiting Artist.

Categories may change to better reflect the purpose to promote the Gardens. We also intend to utilise social media to promote the competition and display the finalists and winners.

# Seasonal activities

Winter gardening tasks at the Gardens are made much more enjoyable by working together as a team on such activities as pruning 3,000 roses or cleaning 140 harakeke. Other gardening tasks we are attending to are planting trees and shrubs, pruning fruit trees, dividing perennials, adding compost, and tidying garden beds.

Winter is the ideal time to prune roses and fruit trees. Prune old rose cultivars by removing dead and weak canes. Lightly prune the tips of healthy canes. Modern roses can be pruned later in June and July. Use sharp secateurs to prune to an outward-facing bud. When pruning roses, we usually start with the removal of the three D's – dead, diseased, and distorted canes. The desired look we want after pruning a rose is an open, vase shape. This allows light into the centre of the plant and helps stimulate the growth of new buds and canes.

Fruit trees such as apples, pears, fejoias and figs can be pruned. The main purpose of pruning fruit trees is to control the size of the tree, allow light in and air circulation, increase fruit production and remove any dead, diseased, and distorted limbs. Choose a nice sunny day to prune to minimise the onset of pests and diseases.

Ensure a spring supply of vegetables by direct sowing broad beans and peas.

Spinach and silver beet can be sown in trays and planted out when ready. Plant garlic and shallot bulbs in a bed with compost and manure worked in. Now is the time to start a strawberry bed if you want them by Christmas. Build up the bed to ensure free drainage and choose a sunny site. Add strawberry fertiliser to the bed before planting and regularly apply liquid fertiliser to the plants.

Now is the time to plant fruit trees and ornamental trees. Before planting work in ample amounts of compost into the soil. There is a selection of dwarf fruit trees available now that are suitable where space is limited.

Lift and divide old herbaceous perennials to control their size, rejuvenate for flower abundance and to increase their numbers. Add ample amounts of compost when replanting divisions to improve soil and promote vigorous regrowth. Perennials are usually divided every few years.

Mere Brewer



# Best new roses - from our summer trails

This year we trialed 12 new rose cultivars bred by Rob Somerfield, David Austin and Bob Matthews. Many produced beautiful blooms but the top three were an easy choice, with high health, good repeat flowering and interesting colour and shape.

## Evaluation Scores

(from a maximum of 10):

A Gardener's Dream	6
Green with Envy	8
Jack Frost	7
Jubilee Celebration	5
Ladies Nights	7
Love Bug	6
Munstead Wood	6
Pink Ribbon	8
Quintessential	5
St Hilda's Rose	8
Strawberry Blonde	7
The Lady Gardener	6

*Rosa Pink Ribbon*



## Our top picks

### - Green with Envy

The much anticipated "green" rose by Rob Somerfield with abundant clusters of green flowers that have not disappointed. A healthy, medium-sized rose with lax arching limbs. Definitely a rose to be picked for floral arrangements.

### - St. Hilda's Rose

Named in honor of St. Hilda's College, Dunedin, this beautiful, rounded, small, compact shrub produced a continuous flurry of loose, perfectly clear white blooms all summer.

### - Pink Ribbon

A similar form to St. Hilda's Rose, this rose has a delicate, sweet, tea scent and high health and vigour. Small and rounded, this is certainly a rose that will be popular with proceeds from sales going to the Breast Cancer Foundation NZ.

## Coming this year

This year I am excited to be adding a range of imported miniature/small garden roses by Amore Roses in Waikato, as well as two interesting new beige roses bred by Bob Matthews, Cup Fever and Cappuccino. All the roses listed above can be seen in the Rose Trial Garden, opposite The Rose Gallery. Shortly, however, I will be moving them to make room for this year's trials.

Beau Timberland

# Broadfield New Zealand Landscape Garden

250 Selwyn Road, Weedons, near Christchurch

Is there a more inspiring private garden in New Zealand than Broadfield with its creative use of native plants? It would be hard to beat the magnificent, perennial border-style, native plant entrance that greeted us when we visited during the New Zealand Gardens Trust conference. Long corridors of

precision-cut totāra hedging framed not just the native planting borders. The hedging also often framed cross-corridor views out to another part of the garden or screened a surprise like the “viewing mound” which one can climb to get an elevated view across the garden and over the Canterbury Plains.

I feel this garden is the perfect marriage between landscape architecture (designed by Robert Watson) and creative use of plants (often landscape architecture can be quite focussed on hard materials with plants playing second fiddle due to uninspired use). While within the design there is emphasis on using and celebrating New Zealand native plants there is also the seasonality of cherry blossoms and autumn trees, and plant diversity with a formal rose garden, canal pond plantings, and an orchard. There is also a sense of fun with quirky sculpture and interestingly clipped plants such as a *Coprosma virescens* formed as a 3-mast sailing ship. This is all set against 1.5 km of totāra hedging, a feat within itself and apparently only cut once a year!

There were so many inspiring ideas which I feel can add to the native plant collections at the Gardens. I really appreciated the skillful combinations of colours and textures as well as





the use of uncommon native plants. There were also ideas on how we could use plants to frame parts of the garden or to create an axis and the grand use of a water feature (this was something that came through strongly in nearly all of the gardens we visited) which is in contrast to the naturalistic lakes we have here. From

empty, flat farmland, this garden has matured in a relatively short time through the design of a strong masterplan, good plant choices, a vision which celebrates things New Zealand and a healthy budget – a worthwhile garden to visit if you are ever in the area!

Jeffery Jones



## Flaxmere

128 Westenras Road, Hawarden,  
North Canterbury

Penny Zino's large North Canterbury garden was the first we visited during the New Zealand Gardens Trust conference, and it set an exceptionally high standard for the gardens to follow. At 55 years old, it is similar in age to the Auckland Botanic Gardens, but with temperatures ranging from +40°C in summer to -15°C in winter the

climate is more challenging.

The garden is now at the "editing" stage, with a number of big trees planted in the early phase of the garden's development being removed to allow other plants more room. Plenty of large trees remain that create a sense of permanence as well as seasonal interest.

Large plantings of natives have been difficult to get going at an altitude of

1,000 metres, but they are now well established. These demonstrate the textural combinations possible with natives, with particularly strong use of alpines, hebes and grasses. Sculptures have also been well placed to enhance the plantings without dominating, and broken branches and rocks have also been artfully placed amongst the plantings.

Perennials and roses have also been used extensively, including in a naturalistic planting inspired by a workshop with Piet Oudolf. This

uses many plants that we also grow at ABG, such as *Penstemon*, *Gaura*, asters, *Salvia*, *Sedum*, *Persicaria* and a range of grasses. It was interesting to see how these plants were growing in a drier climate, as opposed to Auckland's humidity, with denser planting and the ability to leave seed heads for late autumn and winter interest. Some of these grasses are currently being trialled at the Gardens to see how well they do in our climate and whether there are problems with them seeding.

Joanna Mason



# Sarah Featon stamps

The cover of this issue of the newsletter features one of the stamps recently released by NZ Post. The complete set (copyright NZ Post) is shown opposite.

The stamps illustrate the work of an early botanical artist, Sarah Featon. She and her husband published the book *Art Album of New Zealand Flora* between 1887 and 1889 to disprove “the mistaken notion that New Zealand is particularly destitute of native flowers”.

The stamps feature \$1.40 *Clematis paniculata*, then called *C. indivisa*, (puawānanga); \$2.70 *Corynocarpus laevigatus* (karaka); \$3.50 *Clianthus puniceus* (kōwhai ngutu-kākā); \$4.00 *Pleurophyllum speciosum* (Campbell Island daisy).

The original idea of featuring Mrs Featon’s work came from Chris Webb. Lynette Townsend, NZ Post Stamps and Collectables Programme and Content Manager) and the designer Hannah Fortune went to Te Papa to look at Mrs Featon’s watercolours. According to Lynette Townsend, “The images were chosen in collaboration with Te Papa curators who picked their

favourites based on research interests, aesthetic appeal, and a desire to present an interesting and varied mix of New Zealand plant specimens. We also took into account practicalities such as the size of stamps and which illustrations would or would not work well on these tiny canvases. Wherever possible, we aimed to accurately represent the original watercolours.”

The stamps were released on 5 May 2021. Visit the NZ Post’s website for more details on what is available (including a tea towel):

<https://collectables.nzpost.co.nz> and put “Sarah Featon Stamps” in the search bar.

More information on Mrs Featon is in Bruce Sampson’s *Early New Zealand Botanical Art* (a copy is in the Botanic Gardens Library) or visit the Gisborne Herald’s website:

<http://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/frontpage-featured/20210418/gisbornes-unsung-national-treasure/>

We thank Lynette Townsend of NZ Post for her assistance.







*Rosa* Cappuchinno Photo: Jack Hobbs  
See article on page 26.



Auckland Botanic Gardens: [botanic.gardens@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:botanic.gardens@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)  
Friends: [friendsofabg@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofabg@gmail.com)