



P O Box 28-065  
Kelburn, Wellington

## Newsletter

August 2002

**Featuring:** *Friends, Guides and Roses*  
*What's Up in Camellia Valley?*  
*Leanne Leaves*  
*Spring Festival*

### From the President

This will be my last letter to you as President and I want to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Friends who have done so much to support me over the last two years, as well as for all your help and encouragement in the past. The Friends still have a very important and necessary role in providing support to the Curator of the Gardens and his staff and helping in the planning of the Gardens for the future, to ensure that they remain as the jewel in Wellington's crown. The Friends also provide backing for the group of guides round the Gardens, whose activities have been becoming more and more significant as the visitor numbers to Wellington have grown. They do an excellent job in making a visit so much more enjoyable.

I have spent some time recently in filling in an application form for a grant that will provide a new map board for the Rose Garden area. That, too, is a task where the Friends can have significant influence, for they can apply for trust funds for which the Gardens themselves are not eligible. In that way the needs of the Garden can be met despite the financial constraints that the Wellington City Council imposes.

If you thought all this was rather more than a simple, if heartfelt, vote of thanks, you were right. It is important that all the members support their Committee in their endeavours – and that support is desperately needed now. We need to find a new President and Secretary as well as new Committee members. I urge you all to attend the Annual General Meeting as a show of support for the Friends and its important role.

And, can I now have a little boast? I receive seeds from the Alpine Society each year and strive to grow plants from them – success rates vary considerably! But, when I do have spare plants available, I often pass them on to Peter Tijsen or Kate in the Gardens. Some time ago I gave them a *Clematis alpina* and some *Daphne pontica* plants. Both seem to have flourished in the Garden – the Clematis is on wires on the Stone Bridge, growing up from the stream garden area just below the Duckpond, while the Daphnes are flourishing nicely in the Sunken Garden. It is such a pleasure to see them, especially on these beautiful Wellington winter days when the Gardens are such a magic place.

Monica Dearden

**Remember to attend the AGM  
Wednesday 28 August, 7.30pm  
at the Treehouse**

## Friends, Guides and Roses

The last couple of months have been very busy. One of the outstanding walks was the *Man in the Trees*\* with Philip Tomlinson. The large group of people who turned up for the walk were talking about it for weeks. The information about the Pines, Palms, Cork Oaks and Camellias was in-depth and very interesting. If you missed this one make sure you get to the next one. There are walks every month on the third Sunday at 11.00 am at the Founders Gates.

The Seminar on June the 8th of June was a real treat with the 2001 Montana book award finalists talking and showing photographs about their books.

### **Nature Guide to the New Zealand Forest**

Dr John Dawson and Rob Lucas gave a hitchhiker's guide to publishing, with all the various twists and turns that occur in writing a book. The photograph of the kohekohe tree in the Botanic Garden was a beauty and other photos showed how lucky we are to have the Otari Plant Museum and the Botanic Garden. The comments were about the reasons why some photos are used and others not quite suitable. This pointed out the difficulties of picking the "right" one. On the screen the photos were works of art. The early stages of the book gave Jane Conner the credit for having an idea and sticking to the plan once it was established. The process of getting the book written was another story of perseverance. Dr John Dawson was faced with unfamiliar territory but once he worked out the details he had help from very distinguished people who made a valuable contribution to the finished book. It covers trees and shrubs; vines, epiphytes and mistletoes; the forest floor; birds; lizards, frogs and bats; and insects & other invertebrates. It is the first time this has been done like this, with all the

groups in one publication. The book is really a small coffee table book that really is too good to take into the bush. But if you wear out one from use you could take that one on tramps and get a second one for the coffee table.

### **Wellington's Heritage, Plants, Gardens and Landscape**

Winsome Shepherd gave her talk about the way her book was initiated through her first book on the Botanic Garden. It was revealing in her talk about the difficulty in obtaining photographs to illustrate her book and the research required to put the book together. It is not easy when the costs of the illustrations are high, but many of her sources were understanding with one contributor financing the photos for her. Her talk on the early settlement of Wellington with overhead projections brought interesting discussion from the floor. This made her talk more interesting, as she was able to answer the questions asked by the people. It was evident that Winsome's commitment to the book was a labour of love and she went to extraordinary lengths to finance the book to publication. The Wellington City Council and Te Papa Museum were in the right place at the right time. Hopefully they will continue to support publications like this in the future.

### **Dancing Leaves**

Dr Philip Simpson has a passion which I don't think is out of his system yet. This book about Cabbage Trees came out of a PhD thesis and became a work of art. The background stories about how he was able to find information and the connecting the dots way of working, shows the tenacity that a project like this requires. The chance encounters he had would make a television documentary on its own. Tracking down particular trees and the idea of how to solve the origin of a branch

of the cabbage tree family made the story of the writing all the more interesting. The use of cabbage trees by the Maori and how important it was is in the book, but hearing it from the author put life into it.

For the people who bought all the books at the seminar, they saved \$60 on the day. Thanks to the publishers who made this arrangement possible through Winsome's initiative.

### **Outer Town Belt**

After lunch the seminar changed direction with talks by Richard Nanson and Mike Oates. Richard described the way the Outer Town Belt developed with a historic perspective. Mike Oates talked about the management plan and the vision of the Outer Town Belt. Some of the ideas will need to be nurtured by community groups and public participation. There are some details in the management plan stretching all the way to Porirua that look interesting. It is an asset that will see Wellington in the fore-front of green space development and conservation. A panel discussion with Richard and Mike was joined by Walter Cook and Dr Philip Simpson.

Some new members joined when they realised that they could get \$5 back from the \$15 they paid at the door.

### **Rose Pruning 16 June**

Large crowds of curious people turned up for the yearly rose pruning. The Lady Norwood Rose Garden was showing quite a few blooms, an indication of the late autumn weather of great periods of sunlight and medium temperatures. The roses were late this year after a wet dismal spring. Some roses recovered and

put on good flowering in April and May. The Friends rose crew, Ron and Lorraine Clare with Bill Wieben, turned up in the Bolton Memorial Park to do the pruning demonstration. They were assisted by Heritage Rose Society member Rosemary Patterson. A group of over 25 watched and asked questions as roses were pruned. A few took some cuttings away with them to try in their own gardens. Some wanted to know about the roses they were growing. One person wanted to know what rose would grow where salt spray and wind was prevalent. No problem, the rose? 'May Queen'. The group was reminded that later in the year a tour of the old roses is conducted to see the results of the pruning.

### **Botanic Garden Video**

If you are thinking about telling someone about the Botanic Garden you can show them with a video. Sometimes it is forgotten that we do have resources on the Garden. Could be looked at as the equivalent of a medium priced bottle of wine or a cheap bouquet of flowers and it lasts longer. If you are travelling overseas it is easy to pack and it is not a threat to Agriculture or Biodiversity officials anywhere in the world. It does have a film rating of GE which can sometimes be a problem - Green Eye. You will have to be prepared to explain that all the plants in the video grow in one place.

*Bill Wieben*

\* Philip has very generously given the Newsletter the notes he used for his Man In The Trees walk. We'll have Part 1 in the next newsletter. -Ed

## **Special and Unusual Plant Sale 10am Saturday October 5th in the Tree House.**

It is requested that all members and friends grow as many plants as possible in time for this date. Nearer the time please will they advise Richard what plants they have for the sale. Contact 04-4774020  
e-mail [thenansons@paradise.net.nz](mailto:thenansons@paradise.net.nz)

## Profile of a Gardener – Dale Such Collection Supervisor

Dale Such is responsible for the woodland areas of the duckpond, Horseshoe Bend, Soundshell borders, native wetland and Stonebridge Gully collections. They are a varying bunch – from the self-explanatory native wetland to Horseshoe Bend's Asian plants. Dale is currently turning the upper Soundshell bank into a winter garden, building on its existing population of azaleas and adding plants that have foliage, berry or flower colour in winter. "Hopefully," he says, "it'll be a bit of inspiration for people." Those of us whose winter gardens are a fine collection of sticks will find it so.

Right out of school, Dale started as a garden labourer at the cable car 15 years ago. Six months later he had his own areas, "thrown in the deep end", looking after the Magpie and Glenmore lawns. The *erica* collection became his responsibility shortly afterwards, and he stayed in that area for the next decade. Dale says developing and maintaining a collection, such as the ericas, mainly involves maintenance, propagation and acquiring new species and cultivars. Ericas are short-lived, and in a public garden, if a plant looks half-dead, it must be taken out and replaced promptly.

In his leisure time, Dale Such spent 3½ years restoring a convertible 1967 Ford Mustang to show-winning condition. He is the first to admit that the car is more obsession than hobby. According to his

colleagues, though, he puts the same meticulous care and attention into his work in the Botanic Garden as he has into the car.

In the Garden, Dale also enjoys landscaping. "In the last three years I've done probably more landscaping than has been done in the previous 10-15 years," he says. Dale and the team have done a huge amount of rock work in Stonebridge Gully, and he says it's still ongoing. "Gardens are always ongoing – it's a cycle," he notes.

He's put his plant knowledge and landscaping skills to work in many areas, for instance planting native bullrushes in the duckpond to soften the edges.

Dale most enjoys working with collections. "I enjoy getting new plants I've never seen before and learning about those," he says. He also likes propagating, "I'm a bit of a hoarder; get as many of each as you can," and looks forward to planting the results two years down the track. In this job "you think and plan two years in advance," he says.

Hates? Dealing with mindless vandalism, from people (particularly young ones, who slide down banks and run through plants), ducks and thrips. "It would be nice if the ducks got thrips," he says, "then they'd know what it's like."



*Dale in his weekend 'office'*

## Guide Report

### Cruise ships

During this last summer Wellington had visits from 34 cruise ships (10 more than the previous one) between the beginning of December and 9th May. The ships brought 26,000 passengers (7,000 more than last year) to Wellington. The guides spent 310 hours (and 106 hours in travelling time) in the Botanic Garden, welcoming and advising visitors during the summer. February was our busiest month, with visits from 16 ships. Two guides were present at the Cable Car entrance and one in the Rose Garden when the larger ships (700-2,100 passengers) were here, and one at the Cable Car entrance for the smaller ships. As well as cruise ship passengers we met many other international and local visitors, and the guides were generally very busy. With even more tourists expected next season we shall need more guides in attendance than previously.

The weather was quite variable during the summer, with guides braving the wind, rain, and cold at the Cable Car entrance, especially at the beginning of the season. Sometimes it was so wet the guides were on duty in the Begonia House only. Many visitors expressed their appreciation at being met by the guides when they stepped off the cable car, and for their explanation of the layout of the Botanic Garden. Thank you everyone for your time and enthusiasm and your contribution to the success of the season. Thank you to all the staff too, for your dedication and hard work, in making the Botanic Garden such a wonderful place to visit.

### Tours

Since September last year the guides have taken visitors on seven pre-arranged tours of the Botanic Garden, five of which were local Probus or Garden Clubs, and two were groups from the United States. With the gradual recovery of the glow worms after the dry summer of 2000-01,

we have begun taking visitors on glow worm tours again, with two in recent weeks.



*Jenny in her guide gear*

### Sunday walks

Since August 2001 we have held ten guided walks on Sunday mornings at 11am on a variety of topics, including the Herb Garden, flowers in the Main Garden, redwoods and related trees, Gondwanaland plants, and Man's use of trees throughout history. Some walks have been very well attended, and others less so. We are currently experimenting with various methods of advertising for our walks.

### Sir Truby King Park Open Day

On Anzac Day afternoon, four of our guides, Rob, Phil, Cathy, and Sheena, contributed to the success of the Sir Truby King House and Garden Open Day, by conducting groups of visitors around the Garden. We are grateful to Martyn Dench who researched and wrote excellent notes on the garden and its history for the guides.

*Jenny Hickman*

## Camellia Valley

*What has happened to the camellias and why have many of them turned into stumps?*



A few years ago Rob Lucas and Mike Oates carried out a review of 'Camellia Valley'. Obviously, camellia blight was found to be a real problem but more to the point the whole area had become so dark and shady that many of the bushes were not flowering properly. Camellias are shade-tolerant but do need some light. And if they did flower they were so high that you couldn't see them well anyway.

Martyn Dench, outgoing Camellia and Rhododendron Collection Supervisor, says the recommendation was to 'hat-rack' the bushes, and effectively start them off again. This was done in September-October and new growth was thinned the following March-April to keep the form open. To prevent wind damage long branches were also trimmed back. Each season more branches will grow from each leaf node so the bushes will need continual re-thinning to keep their shape.

You can try this at home. Hat-racking is fairly extreme and will result in no or few flowers for 2-3 years, but it's a good way to rejuvenate an old bush, which will come away if given extra encouragement – food and water. Martyn says the Garden's camellias were fed with blood and bone and ammonium sulphate, but a general or acid fertiliser will work just as well. Although it's traditional to prune camellias after they've flowered, so you don't miss out on a season's blooms, Martyn says you can do it at any time, and almost as low as you wish. "You can't kill a camellia, to tell the truth," he says.

Has it worked? One unnamed and unhat-racked bush which never flowered well bloomed prolifically, for the first time ever, this year.

***Martyn Dench recently left the Botanic Garden to return to his roots in Masterton. We wish him well.***

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## Gone Too – Leanne Killalea

After 13 years at the Botanic Garden, Leanne Killalea has left.

Leanne's Botanic Garden career began with planting the tulips, and working in horseshoe bend, the play area, vireya garden and fernery. Leanne says her early years involved "traipsing all over the gardens looking after various collections." In those days the fernery didn't even have a watering system, so a lot of time was spent sprinkler-shifting in summer.

For nearly four years Leanne was team leader of the rose gardens. Then three

years ago she took on the role of Visitor Services Officer, a title which somehow fails to do justice to the huge amount of organising, information-dispensing and liaison she cheerfully managed.

Leanne has left to study fulltime. She started a Bachelor of Business Studies five years ago and wants "to actually finish it." All is not lost, however, because we will see her from time to time as she does some contract work at the Garden.

Good luck Leanne.

## Rhododendron ponticum

*Running wild in parts of Wellington and regarded by some as a pest, Rhododendron ponticum is still a spring charmer. Winsome Shepherd looks into its background.*

The February 2002 New Zealand Rhododendron Association newsletter gives some interesting information about *Rhododendron ponticum*, which is regarded by many British people as a serious weed.

Recent DNA work on the British form seems to indicate that it is a hybrid between the Turkish *R. ponticum* and the American *R. catawbiense*. Both the pink and white forms of *R. ponticum* were a feature in the Wellington Botanic Garden, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, on a slope behind the pond. One pink-flowered plant still exists. A white-flowered *R. ponticum alba* was recently purchased from a Dunedin nursery and reintroduced to this slope [*but has since died – Ed*].

As the plants in the Botanic Garden did not become invasive they were probably derived from the species originating in northern Turkey and which is known not always to have done well in cultivation. The news that the British form is a hybrid should go some way to removing our fear of planting the species in our gardens, including our Botanic Garden. There are some suspicious populations in New

Zealand, for example in the Waikato River reserves. These are under investigation by DOC and may have been deliberately planted.

In 1845 the earliest Australasian nursery catalogue, *Dickinson's of Hobart*, listed both pink and white *R. ponticum* and it is possible that our original pink and white forms of the plant in the Botanic Garden came from this nursery.

Unfortunately this rhododendron is subject to thrip attack. The systemic insecticide Orthene can be used, but as it is toxic to humans, alternative control measures, such as the thrip parasite recently released by HortResearch and the systemic Neem oil which is attracting attention, will be welcome. Peter Tijssen says that the Botanic Garden has been having success with the parasite, which seems to enjoy a thrips diet. Good news indeed.

*Winsome Shepherd*

*A large and healthy example can be seen across the duckpond, at the start of Mamaku Way, on the grassy bank above the Garden's native wetland area.*

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## Botanic Garden's Bush Remnants

Lack of any activity by Council on the bush remnants in the Botanic Gardens is disappointing. The need to conserve and possibly further evaluate these bush remnants has been in the management plan for the last nine years.

No money and insufficient staff are cited as the reasons for this inactivity. However Tony Williams is to discuss with Mike Oates an appropriate plan of action and resolve how this is to be funded.

Two reports already exist. One by Shona Myers and the other by Helen Cranshaw, as well as a chapter on the bush in

Winsome Shepherd and Walter Cook's book "The Botanic Garden, Wellington".

The Friends of the Botanic Gardens Committee generally agreed that if a further report is required it should be on the ecology of the sites and be prepared by Chris Horne and Barbara Mitcalf.

Walter Cook has confirmed that the Friends of Wellington's Botanic Gardens would be eligible for a lottery grant if an application were submitted.

*Richard Nanson*



## **Spring Festival Events**

**Sunday 15 September 9.30am – 2pm**

### **Otari-Wilton's Bush Open Day & Native Plant Sale**

A chance to buy yourself "a gem" for the garden, enjoy the fresh air and some of the best bush walks in Wellington.

Topics and displays; Flax Weaving, Handmade pots and painting, Raku, Living Earth products, Noxious plants and pests, Forest & Bird Society

**Sunday 15 and Wednesday 18 7pm**

### **GUIDED GLOW WORM VISIT**

Enjoy the bush by night.

- *Barbara Mitcalfe*

\$4.00/\$3.00PTL (Passport to Leisure)

**Tuesday 17 7pm**

### **LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVES**

- *Julia Williams*

\$2.00

**Wednesday 18 10am**

### **GUIDED SKYLINE WALK**

3 – 4 hour walk with magnificent views over Wellington.

Good fitness and footwear essential.

Bring lunch and a drink. No dogs.

**Sunday 21 2pm**

### **IDENTIFYING OUR FLORA**

Seminar to identify commonly encountered forest trees, shrubs and vines.

- *Dr John Dawson, Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust*

\$3.00

[www.owb.co.nz](http://www.owb.co.nz)  
Ph 04 499 1400

**Saturday 21 September 9.30am – 2pm**

N Z ARBORICULTURAL ASSOC. REGIONAL CLIMBING COMPETITION.

Duckpond - Wellington Botanic Garden, Glenmore Street

Aerial rescue

Work climb

Footlocking

Speed climb

Throw ball

Kids' climbing 10am - 2pm.

**Sunday 22 September 11 am**

ORCHIDS FOR EVERYONE – GUIDED WALK

This walk is in the Begonia House, Botanic Garden. Little walking involved.

Meet at the Begonia House.

**Sunday 29 September**

TULIP SUNDAY

Wellington Botanic Garden

Music, flowers and food. - A wonderful day with a festival atmosphere

Music from 11am – 3pm

25,000 tulips in bloom

Food and drink with a Dutch flavour

**29 September 1.30 pm**

SPRING FESTIVAL FLOWERS - GUIDED WALK

Moderate walking involved, but fitness not essential.

Meet at the Founders' Entrance to the Main Garden

<p>www.wbg.co.nz Ph 04 499 1400</p>
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*Elingmata johnsonii*

## Coming Events 2002

- 4 - 11 August** Conservation Week Displays at the Wellington Cathedral
- 18 August** "Sensational Succulents" guided walk. 11 am, the Treehouse
- 25 August** "Trials and Trails" Otari-Wilton's Bush guided walk around the Circular Walk with emphasis on the early settlement history. 2pm. Walking shoes required. \$3 Meet at Te Marae O Tane, Otari-Wilton's Bush Information Centre. Ph 04 499 1400 to book
- 28 August** **Friends AGM 7.30pm in the Treehouse**
- 15 - 29 September** **Spring Festival**
- 15 September** **Open Day and Native Plant Sale at Otari-Wilton's Bush**  
Walks - 11am, midday, 1pm & 2pm Explore our unique NZ plants. Walking shoes required. Koha/Donation. Meet at Te Marae O Tane, Otari-Wilton's Bush Information Centre. Ph 04 499 1400 to book
- 17 – 23 September** Clean Up New Zealand Week
- 21 September** Native Week Seminars - Identifying our Flora. 9am and 2pm  
Two different workshops - learn to identify different commonly encountered forest trees, shrubs and vines. Those who attended the very successful workshop in February will find a new set of plants at the afternoon session. Bring your own hand lenses if possible, although some will be made available. There will also be a stereomicroscope. After each workshop we will see most of the plants growing in the forest.
- 21 September** Arboriculture Assoc. Tree Climbing Competition
- 22 September** "Spring Festival Flowers" guided walk. 11am Main Garden entrance
- 29 September** **Tulip Sunday**
- 29 September** "Orchids for Everyone" guided walk. 11am in the Begonia House
- 20 October** "Plants from Myth and Legend" guided walk. 11am Founders entrance
- 16 - 24 November** **Rose Week** Lady Norwood Rose Garden
- 17 November** "Heritage Roses" guided walk. 11 am Meet at the entrance to Bolton Street Memorial Park, beside the Seddon Memorial.
- 1 December** European Xmas Carols in the Garden (rain postpone date 8/12)