



P O Box 28-065  
Kelburn, Wellington

# Newsletter

*February 2002*

*Featuring: Volunteer Guide Convention  
Herb Garden History  
The Cooks Herb Garden  
Kowhai Update  
Coming Events...and more*

## President's report

Happy New Year to you all.

I hope you had a pleasant holiday and managed to find some warm sunshine. The wet months since November have refreshed all the gardens; the trees were certainly in need of the extra rain.

I hope that you all will come to our pre-Festival party, to be held in the Begonia House on Thursday February 21st from 5.30 to 7.30pm, and bring your friends. This is the best time to order bulbs from us; Mary Hutton is ordering a selection now. This is a good source of income for the Friends and we hope you will want to fill your gardens with spring flowers.

I have been struggling with garden thugs in Waikanae - not the weeds, they are always around; the thugs I'm meaning are those lovely garden plants which can fill a whole area at the expense of other more desirable plants. I have in mind granny's bonnets, *Aquilegias*, strong-rooted grannies which push all else out of the way and drop thousands of seeds; shy, retiring violets which can cover a square metre while your back is turned and poppies -

dainty alpine flowers - with taproots which plumb the depths and seed everywhere, particularly in paving cracks. One of the most beautiful thugs in my garden is a Romneya, the Californian tree poppy. Its glorious poached egg flowers set off with glaucous foliage make it a desirable plant; but its beauty covers a massive spreading network of roots, from which shoots arise and spread everywhere in my sunny, sandy conditions.

Your committee has tried to plan a programme for 2002 with something special every month. Please check it out in this letter and mark your diary with the things which interest you. I look forward to seeing you there.

I hope you are enjoying the Botanical Gardens this summer. The gardening staff strive to produce a picture perfect result, to be enjoyed by locals and tourists alike, and their pride in the results is enhanced when we stop to exchange a word of admiration or ask a question - summer is for enjoyment!

*Monica Dearden*

## Australian Volunteer Guides Conference

The Australian National Conference of Volunteer Guides of Botanic Gardens was held at the Australian National Botanic Garden (ANBG) in Canberra late last year.

Among the 105 delegates were two from New Zealand, Christchurch's Adrienne Moore and our own Jenny Hickman.

Speakers ranged from Dr Judy West, Director of the Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research, who spoke about the 40-odd volunteers who mount 20,000-25,000 herbarium specimens for the Centre each year, to Peter Lehmann from the ANBG, who is responsible for the activities provided for the 14,000 students who annually visit the Garden.

The keynote speaker was Professor Mike Gore, a Fellow of Science Communication at the Australian National University, who had some interesting points to make about being an "explainer". Professor Gore's background is in physics and, as a Director of the Questacon Science Centre in Canberra, established their first guides – to make science interesting, entertaining and relevant for visitors. He says a guide's job is not to provide a mass of detail or to teach; it's to help visitors enjoy themselves.



The delegates also heard from guides from the Perth, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane Botanic Gardens.

Speakers were presented with potted plants of *Helichrysum* 'Helping Hand', the floral emblem for the Year of the Volunteer.

One conference day was dedicated to garden visits – the National Gallery's Sculpture Garden, embassy gardens (three of Jeff Thompson's corrugated iron cows graze the grass outside the NZ High Commission), a large country garden in Woden, another beside the Murrumbidgee River, a large farm garden near Mt Stromlo and finally, Government House back in Canberra.

There were also a couple of interactive workshops for delegates to take part in.

The Australian Association of Volunteer Guides of Botanic Gardens has been renamed the Australasian Association, to include New Zealand.

The delegates unanimously agreed that it had been an extremely well-organised, valuable and enjoyable conference.

*Jenny Hickman's trip to the conference was sponsored by the Friends of Wellington's Botanic Gardens.*

The Wellington Botanic Garden and Otari-Wilton's Bush souvenir booklet made it to the press just in time for New Year. From cover to cover it's gorgeous, with good information and fabulous photos. The booklet is a two for one deal featuring both gardens. It's for sale at \$13.50 from the Treehouse, the Botanic Garden Café, the Cable Car Museum and Otari Trust.

## Sunday Guided Walks 2002

*All walks, except the Spring Festival Walk, are on the third Sunday of the month, at 11 am.*

**Sunday February 17**, 11 am.

*"Flowers for Everyone"*

This walk is on terrain suitable for the use of wheelchairs and babybuggies.

Meet at the Founders' Entrance to the Main Garden.

**Sunday March 17**, 11 am.

*"Redwoods and Relatives"*

Visit our Redwood trees and other members of this interesting ancient family of long-lived 'giants.'

Walking shoes and moderate fitness are required for this walk.

Meet at the fountain in the Rose Garden.

**Sunday April 21**, 11 am

*"From the Age of the Dinosaurs- the Legacies of Gondwanaland"*

Walking shoes and moderate fitness are required for this walk.

Meet at the Founders' Entrance to the Main Garden.

**Sunday May 19**, 11 am.

*"Man and Trees"*

Trees in the service of man over one million years.

Walking shoes required.

Meet at the Founders' Entrance to the Main Garden.

**Sunday June 16**, 11 am.

*"Historic Gems"*

The history of the Joy Fountain and the Summerhouse.

Little walking involved. This walk is suitable for the use of wheelchairs and babybuggies.

Meet at the Founders' Entrance to the Main Garden.

**Sunday July 21**, 11 am.

*"Begonias, Bromeliads, and Bananas"*

Tropical and temperate plants in the Begonia House.

Little walking involved.

Meet at the Begonia House in the Rose Garden.

**Sunday August 18**, 11 am.

*"Sensational Succulents"*

Little walking involved, but one steep bit between the Treehouse and the Succulent Garden.

Meet at the entrance to the Treehouse.

**Sunday September 15**, 11 am.

*"Orchids for Everyone"*

This walk is in the Begonia House. Little walking involved.

Meet at the Begonia House.

**Sunday September 22**, 11 am.

*"Spring Festival Flowers"*

Moderate walking involved, but fitness not essential.

Meet at the Founders' Entrance to the Main Garden.

**Sunday October 20**, 11 am.

*"Plants from Myth and Legend"*

Walking shoes required.

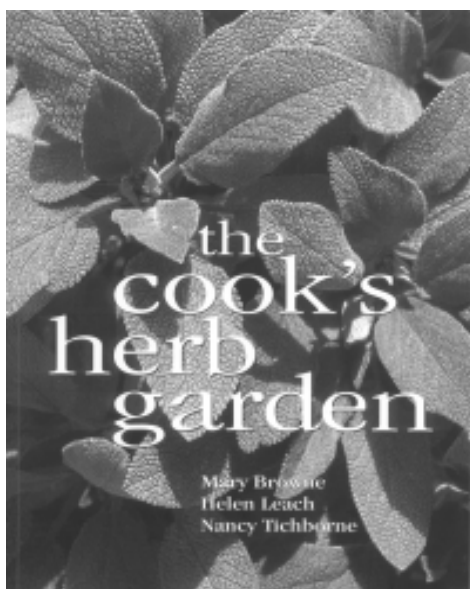
Meet at the Founders' Entrance to the Main Garden.

**Sunday November 17**, 11 am.

*"Heritage Roses"*

Walking shoes required.

Meet at the entrance to Bolton Street Memorial Park, beside the Seddon Memorial.



## Book Review

*We don't usually review books but a request by the Friends to host a book launch for The Cook's Herb Garden was gently turned down (the publishers weren't planning on having a launch) and replaced with the offer of a review copy. If you love plants you're probably interested in herbs too and, since most of us like to eat, we thought it was worth looking at.*

This is no ordinary cookbook. For a start, it comes from the authors of the hugely successful "The Cook's Garden", **Mary Browne, Helen Leach and Nancy Tichborne**, each of whom contributes a special expertise, and, as they say, "The inspiration was shared."

The introduction attempts to define 'herb' with a little easily digestible history (prior to the 1760s what we now call vegetables were called herbes. Cabbage was once classified as a 'kitchen herbe'), and then looks at what constitutes a culinary herb, a sometimes moveable feast. Chives, for instance, if allowed to flower for the garden artist in us, do so to the detriment of their culinary virtues.

The book has understandable and thorough propagation advice, followed by 'kitchen notes' on preservation, storage and the preparation of vinegars and teas.

The authors have done their own research and thinking. For instance they go against the usual cookbook advice that herbs can be frozen, saying, "freezing and thawing cause the cells to collapse, and so lose their fresh characteristics."

To the recipes themselves, 20 culinary herbs get several pages each (including

more history and cultivation advice) – from the old (10 recipes for mint) to the new, like *Perilla* aka 'shiso', which is becoming popular here because of its status as an important ingredient in Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese food.

The much-maligned (and cruelly used in butchers' shops) parsley is treated with respect and given some very tasty recipes. You could even do a whole lemon verbena theme meal from this book, which has drink, dip, main, dessert and cake recipes for that herb alone.

The final section contains a few "More Herbs" recipes, including the delectable-sounding 'Rose (Geranium)-Flavoured Rhubarb Crumble' and 'Lavender Lemonade'\*; a quick-reference cultivation/harvest/uses table; and recipes for "Mixed Herbs" – bouquet garni, fines herbes and herbes de Provence.

The verdict? A fresh and attractively formatted book, plenty of fascinating and informed reading, and, more to the point, lots of yummy recipes, including simple new ways to use common herbs.

*Recommended retail price \$39.95.*

*Published by Random House NZ Ltd*

*\* see page 9 of this newsletter*

## Herb Garden Heroine

*Lorna Rowland set off on two crusades - the establishment of the Herb Garden at the Botanic Garden and of the now-defunct Wellington Herb Society. Donal Duthie relates this amazing woman's story (part one of two).*

Lorna Rowland was a well-known lady with great mana and a fertile imagination. She was articulate, well-educated and loved a challenge. She knew many people as friends and for most, that friendship was an enriching experience. Sooner or later, however, most friends had a falling out with Lorna and this was often a time of bitter adjustment. Nearly always the falling out was subsequently healed over and the friendship renewed on a greater level.

Lorna grew up in Edwardian England. She was the daughter of a vicar in rural middle-class Norfolk. Her father often took her on visits to churches and cathedrals in an effort to stimulate an interest in ecclesiastical architecture. This was not Lorna's idea of a good time. From an early age she was interested in plants, especially plants useful to man. She took note of all the plants growing in the woods and roadsides and talked to local people about what traditions were associated with certain plants and how they could be used.

Lorna vividly remembered visiting a small community of people who produced dye from woad. The dye was a wonderful indigo blue colour much valued in the fabric trade. However, the fermentation of woad, in large pits, produced an incredibly foul, persistent smell (*Perhaps not surprising; woad is a member of the cabbage family. -Ed*). The smell was so bad that those associated with the dye production were treated as pariahs by the rest of the locals.

As a young woman Lorna set off to travel the world. She lived in outback Queensland for a while, gaining an insight into tropical herbs and spices. She arrived in New Zealand just before the outbreak of World War 2 and, because of the difficulties of travel, her stay became an extended one. As time passed, New Zealand became "home" and she never left. She had a variety of jobs, most

associated with journalism. For many years she worked for the old Free Lance, in particular accompanying the 1953-54 Royal Tour for the paper. She had a column in The Dominion for a long time and also one in Truth. Lorna was publicity agent for The New Zealand Players and also worked for CORSO.

For many years Lorna lectured at the WEA on the subject of 'Herbs and the Use Of'. These classes were very popular and Lorna saw a rising interest in the subject. In the 60s and 70s most people were aware of mint, rosemary and thyme but not much else. It was very difficult to get plants of what are now very common herbs.

Lorna, who was well into retirement, then launched a campaign to establish a Herb Society and a Herb Garden for Wellington. Her campaign had a missionary zeal about it that at times verged on a crusade. All within her sphere were summoned to the cause. Few resisted!

The founding of the Wellington Herb Society seemed quite ordinary, but under the surface, Lorna had pulled every string she could. All her contacts at the WEA were involved; supportive staff from the Botanic Garden and anybody else with an interest in herbs was there. Most importantly, one of the principle aims of the Society was to establish a herb garden at the Wellington Botanic Garden. With Lorna at the helm as first President this was bound to happen.

The Wellington Herb Society took off with pizzazz and gusto. It was an instant success. Lorna's friends, and all their friends, flocked to meetings. Word went round that this was the Society to belong to.

*Next issue – the mission to include a Herb Garden in the Botanic Garden.*



## KOWHAI UPDATE

*Further to our  
kowhai feature,  
Pat Enright has  
news of more  
Sophora species*

In March 2001, the publication of a taxonomic review of the *Sophora microphylla* complex marked the culmination of years of research and fieldwork by Peter Heenan, Peter de Lange and Aaron Wilton. As a result of their hard work, *S. microphylla* has been typified, two new species described, two species reinstated and a new combination created.

Eleven leaf and four growth habit characteristics were used to determine these species.

*S. microphylla* is the only species with a divaricate, or strongly flexuose, juvenile phase, which may persist for many years. The adult tree usually has an upright, robust form, but occasionally it is found with a weeping habit, as can be seen at Ahi Paku in eastern Wairarapa.

*S. molloyi* is a low growing to sprawling shrub that favours dry, exposed sites, usually coastal. It is found around the Wellington south coast, eg Palliser Bay, and on several islands in Cook Strait. The plant sold in nurseries as “Stephens Island” form or “Dragons Gold” is this species.

*S. godleyi* has no divaricate juvenile form and eventually forms a large grey-green tree. It is found on sandstone and calcareous mudstone in the central North Island. A good place to see this species is at the Paengaroa reserve just outside Taihape.

*S. fulvida* is found in the north of the North Island growing mainly on volcanic rocks. It forms a small to medium sized tree.

*S. chathamica* is a species very similar to *S. microphylla* but lacks its distinctive juvenile form. Leaf characteristics can be used to differentiate the adult forms of the two species. It has a somewhat disjunct distribution, being found in the north of the North Island, around Wellington and on the Chatham Islands, and is sometimes sold in nurseries as “Goldies Mantle”.

*S. longicarinata* is a species found in the north of the South Island where it forms a shrub or small tree. It sometimes has an underground branching system and then forms a bushy clump.

Hybridism between these species and with *S. tetraptera* has been noted in the wild. *S. microphylla* also hybridises with *S. prostrata*, at least in the Waitaki Valley, where both species grow together. The amenity and garden planting of variously labelled specimens (some of doubtful accuracy) is listed, by the authors of the taxonomic paper, as posing a threat to some of the less common species listed here.

For more information on these beautiful native trees I recommend the papers listed below.

### References:

Heenan, P.B. 1998: Reinstatement of *Sophora longicarinata* (Fabaceae) from northern South Island, and typification of *S. microphylla*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 36: 369-379.

Heenan, P.B.; de Lange, P.J.; Wilton A.D. 2001: *Sophora* (Fabaceae) in New Zealand: taxonomy, distribution, and biogeography. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 39: 17-53

## Bulbs For Sale

*As in previous years, the Friends of Wellington's Botanic Gardens will have daffodil, tulip and crocus bulbs available for sale to members.*

The bulbs have already been ordered, with the tulips coming from Van Eeden Tulips, West Plains, Invercargill. This order is incorporated with the Botanic Gardens order.

### Daffodils – 5 bulbs for \$4:

**Bambi** - Miniature bi-colour. White petals with soft yellow trumpet.

**Camellia** - Double flower. Soft primrose colour. Vigorous

**Crescendo** – Yellow petals, yellow cup with orange-red band on the rim. Vigorous

**Greenland** – Pure icy white. Small cup with green-tinged margin. Late

**Regulosus Jonquilla** – Clusters of dainty, small, rich yellow flowers. Delicious scent. Good for growing in pots

**Romance** – Soft white petals. Deep pink cup

**Trim** – Smaller flower. Rich gold. Very late flowering

### Tulips – 5 bulbs for \$5:

**Daydream** – Begins yellow but matures to soft apricot

**Moonshine** – Yellow lily type. Late

**Ollioules** – Soft rose pink with white margin on petals

**Vulcano** – Deep carmine red

### Crocus – 10 bulbs for \$4:

**Cinderella** – Palest blue with white stripes

**Sunkist** – Golden yellow

Orders and enquiries to Mary Hutton,  
130 Glenmore Street, Wellington 6005  
Phone (04) 475 9268

---

## Cuttings

❖ **Rose Week** was particularly wet. A few hardy folk came out to the gardeners' talks. A visiting group of American Society members were suitably entertained with a walk and talk by staff during the Sunday of the Spring Rose Show.

❖ **The new websites** are cracking along with about 500 visitor "hits" per month recorded to the Botanic site, and 250-300 to Otari-Wilton's Bush site. Check them out at [www.wbg.co.nz](http://www.wbg.co.nz) and [www.owb.co.nz](http://www.owb.co.nz)

❖ The **Interislander Summer City** entertainment lineup in the Garden is in full swing. Garden Magic lighting once

again lights up and enchants the Main Garden area. Not every night has been completely successful however...



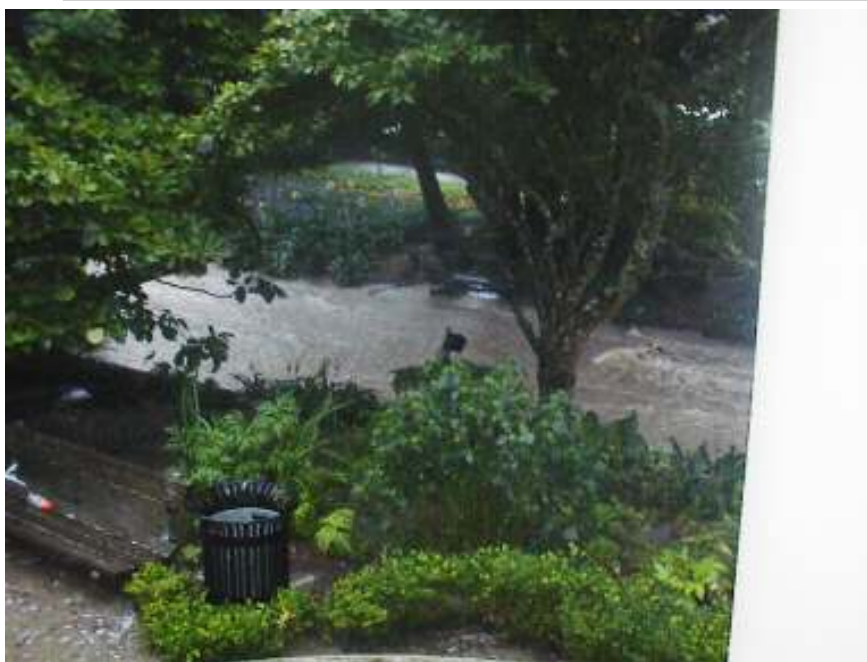
*Peter Frater and Ritesh Parbhu wading around outside the duckpond after the deluge the night of Thursday January 10*



The annual Christmas get-together for Gardens staff, Friends and volunteers, hosted by the Botanic Gardens, was held in the Treehouse last December.

We were welcomed by Curator-Manager Tony Williams (left) who introduced Deputy Mayor Alec Shaw (centre). The Deputy Mayor gave a short address, praising staff, and thanking the Friends, for their work in the gardens. He described the Botanic Gardens as a most important tourist attraction, second only to Te Papa.

Everyone present enjoyed the opportunity to meet and chat together. We thank Tony and his staff for inviting us.



*What looks like a raging torrent is actually one of the Botanic Garden paths as it was on the night of flash floods, January 10 – both a path and a stream, or perhaps just a streaming path.*

## Low-Spray Rose Care



With the Autumn Rose Show coming up perhaps it's timely to investigate how Botanic Garden staff deal with rose pests and diseases. They are running a low spray programme – spraying only those roses that need it when then they need it. According to Rachel Solomon, Collection Supervisor, Modern Roses, every fortnight each rose bed is individually assessed and fungicides applied only if blackspot or rust are getting out of hand. If only a few

leaves are affected, they are picked off and destroyed.

There have been greater problems with fungus than usual this year because of the high rainfall and the humidity that goes with it.

Integrated Pest Management techniques are used. Natural predators are encouraged (hoverflies and ladybirds) by growing beneficial insect-attracting plants in the nearby perennial borders and no insecticides are applied to the roses. A parasitic wasp which lays its eggs in aphids is brought in from Bioforce in Pukekohe, and mites that predate on spider mites are released into the rose garden. Small infestations of aphids are dealt with using digital control (squishing them!), and Rachel says the home gardener can spray diluted dishwashing liquid onto aphid-plagued roses.

Plants that encourage beneficial insects to come and live in your garden are often small-flowered. Plants such as *Phacelia* and Queen Anne's Lace (let the odd carrot go to seed too), other members of the Umbelliferae family and any plant that bees visit are particularly useful.

*(Photo, from the souvenir booklet, is of Paola, one of the Garden's top 10 performing roses.)*

---

## Lavender Lemonade

*from The Cook's Herb Garden by Mary Browne, Helen Leach and Nancy Tichbourne*

1 cup sugar  
2 ½ cups water  
¼ cup fresh English lavender flowers\*,  
stripped from stalks  
  
1 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice  
2 ½ cups chilled water or mineral water  
lavender sprigs for garnishing

Heat the sugar and water in a small saucepan until sugar has dissolved and boiling point is reached.

Remove from the heat and immediately add the lavender flowers. Stir

Cover the saucepan and leave to infuse for 1 hour. Strain through a fine sieve and discard the flowers. Chill

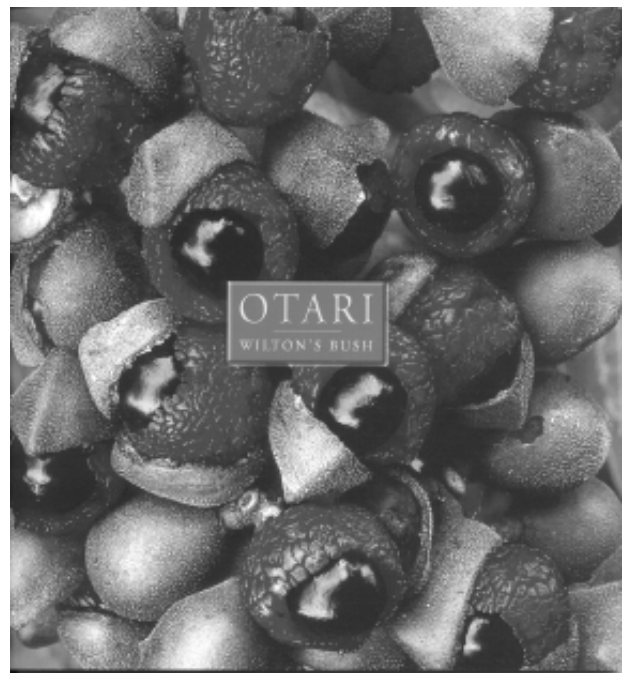
When ready to serve, pour the lavender syrup into a glass jug. Stir in the lemon juice and second quantity of water. Serve in tall glasses, a third filled with ice, and garnish each with a sprig of lavender.

*\*don't use the camphor types of lavender such as dentata and stoechas in recipes. -Ed.*

## Coming Events 2002

- February 21** Thursday Evening Changers and Strawberry party 5.30pm in the Begonia House
- March 24** Autumn Rose Show
- March 13** Wednesday Lecture 7.30 pm in the Treehouse  
Ann Richardson, lecturer in social and garden history will speak on : The history of garden design in England and new trends in gardening. This meeting is a combined one, with the Royal NZ Institute of Horticulture.
- June 5** Arbour Day
- June 8** Friends Botanic Garden Saturday Seminars 9.00am in the Treehouse  
Lunch will be available in the Begonia café
- June 16** Rose Pruning demo
- July 13** Friends Botanic Garden Saturday Seminars 9 am in the Treehouse
- August 28** Wednesday Friends AGM 7.30 pm in the Treehouse
- September** Spring Festival and Friends Plant Sale (date to be advised)

*The cover for the Otari-Wilton's Bush half of the new Botanic Gardens souvenir booklet features a closeup of the fruits of the Titoki - "Furry capsules protect the developing fruit and, when ripe, split to reveal a large shiny black seed embedded in a bright red aril."*



Friends of the Wellington Botanic Garden

President Monica Dearden, phone 934 6542

Newsletter Editor Charmaine Scott, phone 383 6285 email [thecats@globe.net.nz](mailto:thecats@globe.net.nz)

Printed by NS Services phone/fax 970 5036