



P O Box 28-065
Kelburn, Wellington

Newsletter

May 2002

Featuring: *Goodbye to a Gracious Lady*
Wonderful Winter Seminars
Herb Garden History Part 2
IPM and the Nursery

From the President

I recently attended a resource consent hearing for the alterations to the service area at the back of the Begonia House. A group from the Committee were successfully supporting the Botanic Gardens in its plans to upgrade the facilities, in the light of objections to them. The Committee provide valuable public input into many aspects of the planning and development of the Gardens, which was what was envisioned when the Friends of the Gardens was first established. At the other end of the process, we also provide support for the implementation of those plans.

To continue that support, and to provide continuity for the Friends, we urgently need to have more helpers on the Committee. I have decided to step down at the next AGM so a new President must be found. We will also need a new Secretary to deal with Minutes and Correspondence, and a new Treasurer, since Malcolm McCaw has also decided to make this year his last on the Committee. We need new prospective committee members to come forward now, to ensure that the work that the Friends does can continue as successfully as it has in the past.

Finding members to serve on a committee is always a challenge for

any organisation. But the Gardens are a jewel in the crown of Wellington and they need, and deserve, the support of our members so that they can continue to flourish as they have done for the past hundred years. It is vital that we get volunteers to play their part. So, please, do give consideration to offering to help.

One important part of the support we give the Gardens is our team of Guides. They have been very active over the summer tourist season, enhancing the pleasure of the Gardens for both local and international visitors. Their contributions have been recognised by the City Council in their agreement to provide suitable uniforms for the guides, which will make them more visible to the visitors.

On another positive note, we have had good responses for our appeals for help in the past. We were delighted to have Florence de Ruyter take over the important position of Membership Secretary, while the last two excellent newsletters have been edited by Charmaine Scott, who has really made an impact. All their help makes the Committee work better and increases our contribution to the wellbeing of the Gardens.

Monica Dearden

September Walk Date Change

"Orchids For Everyone" is now on Sunday **29 September, at 1.30pm** (was on the 15th at 11am). Meet at the Begonia House. September 29 is also 'Tulip Sunday'.

Obituary – Dorothy Archibald

By training a geographer, by profession a lecturer, Dorothy was a caring and gracious woman who had a great love for and wide knowledge of plants.

A foundation member of the Friends, she gave generously of her enthusiasm, knowledge and time. She shared weekend duty on the Treehouse reception desk, warmly welcoming visitors to the gardens.

Visitors were welcomed, too, to 'Glen Ferny', her garden at Days Bay, where there were always plants to enjoy, in particular her favourites,

rhododendrons, especially vireyas, magnolias and hydrangeas.

Dorothy was also a founding member, committee member and life member of the Wellington Regional Rhododendron Group. She gave long service to the Eastbourne Horticultural Society, as a committee member and exhibitor. The Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust was another of Dorothy's loves.

On behalf of our members and staff of the Botanic Garden we say thank you, Dorothy, for your contribution.



Volunteer Guides – We Want More!

More guides are needed. What's involved? Guides escort visitors round the Botanic Garden, showing them many of its treasures and history. They also welcome cruise ship visitors and run the popular Sunday Walks.

How much time does it take? As much or as little as you can spare, once the initial training is done.

Training consists of 8 to 10 2 hour sessions.

If you'd like to know more about being a volunteer guide, or even better, want to become one, contact the Treehouse reception on 499 1400, or Jenny Hickman on 383 6561.

Saturday Seminars at The Treehouse

June 8 2002

9am – noon Montana Book Award 2001 finalists in the
'Environment' category:
❖ Dr John Dawson and Rob Lucas, "Nature Guide to the
New Zealand Forest."
❖ Winsome Shepherd, "Wellington's Heritage. Plants,
Gardens and Landscape ."
❖ Dr Philip Simpson, "Dancing Leaves."
We hope to have the above books for sale at a concessional price.

12.15-1.15pm Lunch (Begonia House café)

Afternoon Outer Town Belt:
1.30 Richard Nanson, "The Beginning"
2.15 Mike Oates, "Where We Are Today – the
Management Plan"
3.00 Friends' submission
3.15 Open discussion – John Dawson, Philip Simpson,
your suggestions, conclusion
3.30 Afternoon Tea

July 13 2002 **Flowers and Plants of the World**

9-10am The Dolomites – Richard Nanson
10-11 The Mediterranean – Monica Deardon
11-noon West China – Szechuan and Yunnan – Don King

12.15-1.15 Lunch (Begonia House café)

1.30-2.30 Plants of New Caledonia – John Dawson
2.30-3.30 Growing Vireyas in the Botanic Garden – Martyn Dench
(Camellia and Rhodo Collection Supervisor)

Admission: Members \$10 per session, non-members \$15
Lunch, Begonia House tearooms: \$6 (must be pre-ordered
before the Saturday prior to each seminar) Phone Winsome
Shepherd 476 6589 or Mary Hutton 475 9268

Profile of a Gardener – Neil Christensen Operations Supervisor, Botanic Garden

In any organisation there are one or two people who hold the institutional memory; people who've been there long enough to have a real sense of a place's history. They've seen beginnings, changes, failures and successes.

Neil Christensen is one such person. He began his horticultural apprenticeship, in the Gardens, in 1974. In those days it took 9,000 hours - 4 or 5 years - to complete an apprenticeship! The reward was the job of looking after the borders around the Lady Norwood Rose Garden, which has had a lasting effect; Neil still enjoys working on borders. "I suppose my forte is bedding displays," he says.

Neil's next promotion was to foreman of the main gardens area, then to Overseer around 20 years ago. 'Overseer' is no longer a fashionable word, so Neil is now Operations Supervisor, doing very little hands-on gardening, although "I do like to get in there and do some, otherwise you tend to lose touch," he says.

Neil looks after the day to day running of the operational side of the gardens - making sure staff are paid and happy, co-ordinating contractors, ordering supplies ranging from bark to fertiliser to toilet paper, and consulting with collection supervisors. "I have my finger in the pie," says Neil, "so they don't think I'm long gone."

He's seen many changes, from the Café opening, to the Begonia House lilypond extension, to the duckpond and the new play area. And, he says, "We've had good times with all those things."



"It's old, too," was Neil's comment about the kauri he's standing next to.

Neil says that what has made the job so enjoyable for him has been the staff, both past and present. His colleagues have been a great help and made the job a lot of fun, too.

Neil's latest challenge has not been a horticultural one. He's joined the computer age. "They didn't have them back then so it's bloody hard for us oldies to learn to use them," he says. But, like the plants, sprayers, tractors and trucks, he has mastered it.

The Friends intend to hold a plant sale for members in October...

To make this a special occasion we will have a lunch for members after the sale.

As the nursery at the Garden is no longer a production nursery we are asking members to pot up their special plants and bring them along to contribute to the sale.

We know that many members are interested in and grow a great range of plants and we would be keen to have some idea of what you will bring. If you can ring Richard Nanson on 477 4020 or email: thenansons@paradise.net.nz it would be most helpful.

Cuttings

- The souvenir booklet launch went off well and promotion and sales have increased. Sales are doing well in all of the outlets - The Botanic Garden Café, Te Papa, Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust, Williams Garden Place, The Treehouse and the Cable Car Museum.
- A visitor survey has been completed in the Botanic Garden and the information is being collated this month.
- The Gardens have purchased a digital camera for use on the website and tree database. As part of stage one of upgrading the Treehouse two new carpet mats, two gondolas and a glass display cabinet for wood products for the retail area have been bought. New pots and new laminated tops for the tables are still coming.
- Sadly, the Wellington Rose Society's Autumn Rose Show was cancelled due to the poor performance of members' roses (the fault of the weather, rather than the members!).
- Recently the Gardens have been approached by: a man from the USA writing a book on the Best Gardens of the World (he's including our Botanic Gardens, Christchurch Botanic Gardens and one other from New Zealand); the editor of Australian Home and Garden Diary for events and happenings for them to publish and the photographer of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden Calendar to have an exhibition in the Treehouse in January 2003.
- Publicity has lately been given to dozens of kauri seedlings that have been found in the kauri grove at Otari-Wilton's Bush. Since kauri are said to not self-seed south of Tauranga, and if they do the parent plants normally produce a root chemical which kills them off, this is a very significant discovery. Volunteer guide Bill Winstanley has counted, measured and labelled the kauri and the area is included in OWB guided tours.

Note from the Editor

I welcome letters to the Editor. Should you wish to comment on an article or tell us about something coming up or simply something dear to your heart, send it to **Newsletter Editor, Friends of Wellington's Botanic Gardens, Box 28065, Kelburn, Wellington.**

This is your newsletter, not mine. Unsolicited articles on interesting people or plants will always be made very welcome! They may not appear in the very next issue, but eventually there'll be just the right space free.

Anonymous contributions, however, will not be accepted (unless they're really funny). This is to protect both myself (I get into enough trouble sometimes as it is) and the Friends.
Charmaine



Pondlife in the Editor's garden. The frog is real, the duckling isn't (well, it's real plastic).

Herb Garden Heroine

Donal Duthie presents part two of the tale of the amazing Lorna Rowland and her mission to establish a Herb Garden at the Botanic Garden.

Early meetings of the Wellington Herb Society were held in rooms in upper Willis Street and attendance was so high, people were standing on the stairs, waiting in vain to get in. The Society then found new premises at The Loaves and Fishes next to the Anglican Cathedral. Such were the multitudes that contemplation was given to even larger accommodation. Numerous Wellington personalities and characters joined and the Herb Society became the most interesting and stimulating horticultural organisation around.

To advance with the idea of a herb garden, Lorna knew that it was important to have some money. Money was best obtained through the sale of plants and this could be done at fairs and shows. The early shows of the Wellington Herb Society are a story unto themselves. The very first was a table at the Rose Society Show in the Town Hall. Crowds swamped the table and all was sold in a very short time.

The next two shows were held at the Wellington Settlement and a stupendous effort went into preparation. Older members still talk about the 5am starts to transport plants and produce to the venue. The crowds continued to roll in and the bank account went from healthy to very healthy.

Not one to rest on her laurels, Lorna was soon putting pressure on any person who might be able to assist in establishing a herb garden in the Botanic Garden. City Councillors, the Director of Parks, the Curator, the Head Gardener, the Nursery Foreman, other staff and anyone else interested were subjected to persistent lobbying from Lorna and her entourage. She wanted a herb garden and made no bones about it!

It didn't take Ian Galloway, Director of Parks, long to concede to Lorna and the

Herb Society's request, especially when the request was backed with money.

But a decision in principle to build a herb garden could still be a long way from the reality. First there was a site to choose, then there was money to be got from Council. Ian Galloway made it clear that Council money would have to come through the dreaded estimates. Everyone knew that estimates could take years and that it was often a good way to choke off a project altogether. Without too much hassle a site was chosen on the ridge above the Rose Garden. The Parks Department Landscape Designer, Mary Buckland, was given the design project. In a short time Mary returned with a plan for a series of planter boxes arranged in a semi-formal pattern along the ridge. Ian Galloway wouldn't have a bar of it and the Buckland plan was sent back to the drawing board. Ian Galloway asked for something that showed the traditional nature of herb gardens and shortly after Mary Buckland produced the current design. It won instant approval from Ian Galloway. The plan was passed onto Lorna and her committee who in turn gave it their blessing.

The Buckland plan called for bricks in great quantity and they had to be old bricks. At the time old bricks were starting to become scarce and going up in price. While discussing the subject of when the herb garden might commence, Ian Galloway stated, perhaps rashly, that, "If the bricks can be obtained, then a brickie will be supplied".

It just so happened that over the road in Glenmore Street preparations were underway to demolish 14 tiny cottages to make way for the new Chinese Anglican Church. Permission was obtained to remove the substantial brick chimneys from each cottage. Brick retrieval started immediately and went through a Thursday and Friday, culminating in a tremendous effort on the Saturday, when all staff turned

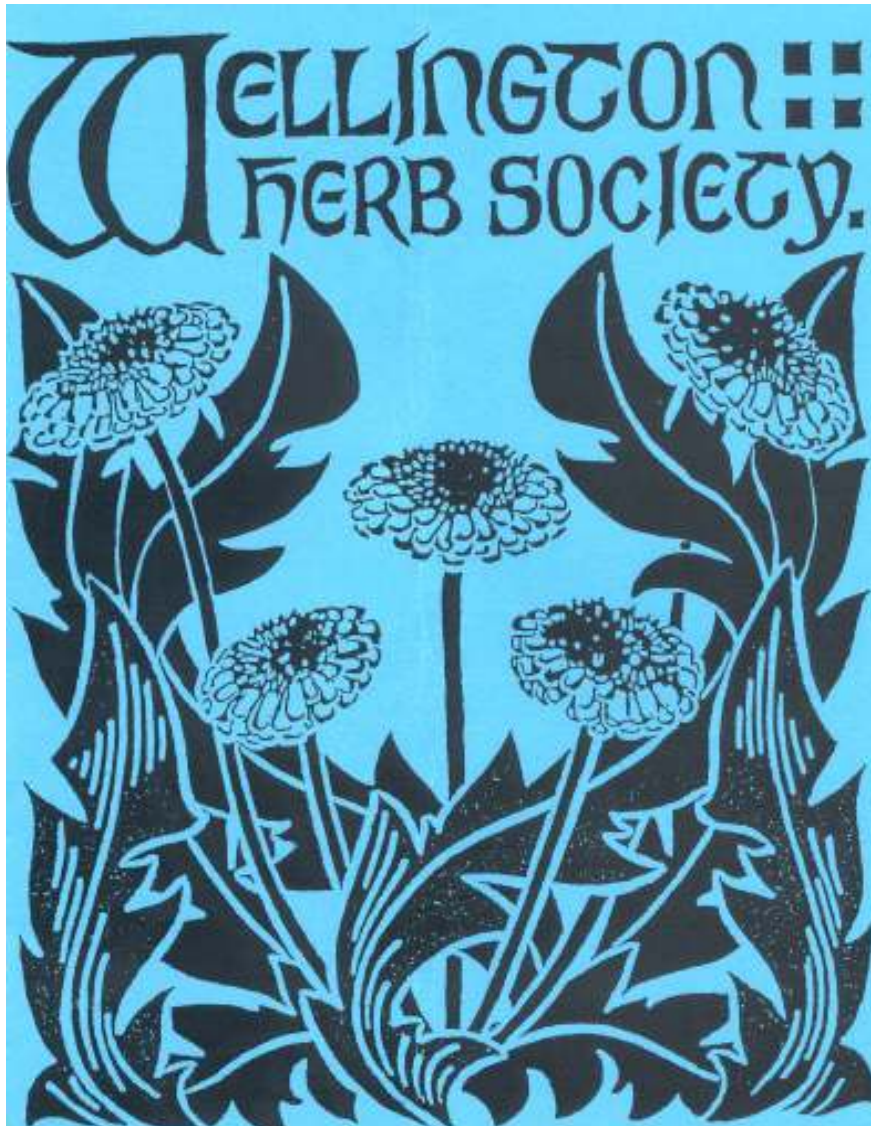
up as volunteers, assisted by a large group from the Herb Society. Members not only cleaned and stacked bricks but also supplied a splendid lunch of sandwiches, herbal scones and herbal tea. It was a great day; one that is still talked about by all those concerned.

On the Monday morning Ian Galloway was presented with 40,000 bricks. Building of the garden commenced soon after. At the official opening Lorna was aware that a milestone had been reached – the garden was a reality. From this point on Lorna was a bit more relaxed and allowed the Herb Society to run its own way. She wrote a book on herbs, with

Walter Cook doing the illustrations, and quietly slipped into retirement.

By the mid-90s the impetus had gone from the Herb Society. Lorna Rowland had since died and the missionary zeal had faded with her. Besides, it was by then easy to buy all sorts of herbs from any garden centre. After a protracted struggle for existence the Society was wound up. Its last act was to consign all remaining funds for signs in the Herb Garden.

There is no memorial to say that Lorna Rowland was the founder but there is no doubt she was the guiding force behind the Herb Society and the Herb Garden.



This Wellington Herb Society logo is from an original lino-cut by Friends' committee member Walter Cook.

It was initially designed as one of two posters advertising the second Herb Society show.

Walter's linocut was subsequently printed and used as the poster for the annual Herb Society shows.

It also graced the covers of the society's newsletters.

Natural Nursery – IPM

The Botanic Gardens nursery uses no chemical sprays. None whatsoever. Kate Kidman is the nursery supervisor, and as part of her job needs to have a huge number of healthy plants ready for rotation into the Begonia House as the incumbents finish flowering or otherwise become tired-looking.

Kate started exploring using Integrated Pest Management techniques in 1996. The first glasshouse pest to be targeted was whitefly. Whitefly is a particular problem in glasshouses and on solanaceous plants such as tomatoes. The main problem with whitefly is that it excretes honeydew, which sooty mould then grows on, reducing photosynthesis and making lower leaves unhealthy and unsightly.

A parasitic wasp, *Encarsia formosa*, was bought from a biological control company. This wasp lays eggs in whitefly nymphs or in scale, giving its larvae a guaranteed food supply.

The nursery now gets several parasites from biological control companies - *Encarsia*, three predatory mites and a parasitic nematode, the latter to control weevils. Weevil larvae munch on roots and adult weevils eat notches out of leaves, so they're a real nuisance.

Mealybug and thrip controls are reared in the nursery; breeding colonies are easily set up and maintained, according to Kate. A mealybug population is established on old sprouted potatoes, the Australian ladybird *Cryptolaemus montroizieri* is introduced and a month later around 200 young ladybirds are ready to be moved (using care and great eyesight; the ladybird larvae look very similar to mealybugs!) into the glasshouses, where one ladybird can eat 50 mealybugs a day. It "all happily carries on in lidded plastic boxes", says Kate, "taking very little time to set up and almost none at all to maintain."



Another small collection of plastic boxes contains thrip-infested lemons. A parasitic wasp, *Thripobius semileutus*, is being raised on the thrips that are disfiguring the lemons.

The nursery used to buy in populations of a predatory mite, *Amblyseius cucumeris*, to control pest mites. Once on site, however, it spread so easily there are now colonies all over the place and the population is self-maintaining. It's not always that easy, though. Kate is having a great deal of difficulty rearing the latest parasitic wasp introduction because the mites are getting into the boxes and eating the newcomers!

Once the nursery stopped using toxic chemical sprays many other beneficial insects moved in to help, albeit unwittingly, with pest control. Naturally-occurring arrivals include lacewings, ladybirds, cockroaches, hoverflies, aphid and scale parasites, assassin bugs, predatory mites and spiders.

An important facet of IPM is observation. It's better to move predators or parasites in as soon as a pest is noticed – the greediest of us can still only eat so much! One easy way to keep an eye on pests is to keep a couple of "indicator" plants in each glasshouse. The 'foliage' glasshouse has two vireya rhododendrons that will never go on public display. They are there because thrips love them. If thrips get into this glasshouse they head for the vireyas, so Kate and her team don't need to spend time examining all the plants for early signs of thrip infestation.

Economic threshold is another consideration. Hippeastrums, for instance, get thrips on leaves which only emerge after the flowers (and display period) finish. The plants are herbaceous – the leaves die off every year – so unless the infestation is so bad it begins to affect plant health, it's not cost-effective to treat it.

The aim of IPM is to reduce pest numbers to an acceptable level, rather than eradicate them completely. After all, you need to keep a few pests around to sustain the beneficial insects.

As one pest is controlled another seems to move in. Kate says the nursery never used to have much of a thrip problem, that is, until the whitefly were dealt with. Or it may be that thrips were secondarily killed by insecticides in the past. Whatever the reason, a natural control then had to be

found for thrips. Then one for mites; broad mites, for instance, love begonias. And so it goes on. Kate's guess is that the next pest to become a problem will be the passion vine hopper, already seen in great numbers in some areas last summer. And yes, there is a native wasp which parasitises passionvine hopper eggs!



A patch of Coreopsis next to a glasshouse provides nectar for adult parasitic wasps, and a lovely autumn display for worker-humans.

Otari-Wilton's Bush Walks and Seminars

26 May, 2.00pm **Exploring the Nature Walk circuit**, paying particular attention to the specialised plants of our forests - rampant vines of many species and the gardens of epiphytes (perching plants) in the tree tops. Walking shoes required. \$3
Meet at Te Marae O Tane, Otari-Wilton's Bush Information Centre. Ph: 04 499 1400 to book

22 June, 2.00pm **Seminar - Identifying our Flora:
Tree Ferns, Tree Ferns and more Tree Ferns**
Introducing 9 out of 10 NZ tree ferns. This is your chance to learn how to identify the native tree ferns. We will examine differences in the details of the fronds of the various species, investigate with hand lenses and a stereomicroscope and view colour slides. \$3
Meet at Te Marae O Tane, Otari-Wilton's Bush Information Centre. Ph: 04 499 1400 to book

23 June, 2.00pm **Walk -Tree Ferns, Tree Ferns and more Tree Ferns**
Explore the forest to find all of our tree ferns and learn how to identify them by general features of their appearance. Walking shoes required and a good pair of eyes \$3
Meet at Te Marae O Tane, Otari-Wilton's Bush Information Centre. Ph: 04 499 1400 to book

28 July, 2.00pm **Travelling the Trails**
A guided adventure of the highlights along the Blue Trail - including the kohekohe forest and 800 year old rimu. Walking shoes required. \$3
Meet at Te Marae O Tane, Otari-Wilton's Bush Information Centre. Ph: 04 499 1400 to book

Coming Events 2002

- 19 May** "Man and Trees" guided walk. 11am, meet at the Founders' entrance
- June 5** Arbour Day
Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust – Kaiwharawhara Reforestation Planting - Stage 2 Begins
- 8 June** Friends Seminar Series 9am in the Treehouse
Book Award Finalists: Nature Guide to the NZ Forest, Dancing Leaves, Wellington's Heritage, plants, gardens and landscape. The Outer Town Belt
- 16 June** "Historic Gems" guided walk. 11am, Founders' entrance
Rose Pruning demonstration & cuttings -
1.00pm modern roses - Lady Norwood Rose Garden
2.15pm old fashioned roses - Bolton Street Memorial Park
...with the Wellington Rose Society and the Heritage Rose Society
- 13 July** Friends Seminar Series 9am in the Treehouse
Flowers and Plants of the World
- 21 July** "Begonias, Bromeliads and Bananas" guided walk 11am, Begonia House
- 4 - 11 August** Conservation Week Displays at the Wellington Cathedral
- 4 August** Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust – Kaiwharawhara Reforestation Planting - Significant, special & threatened species planting day
- 18 August** "Sensational Succulents" guided walk 11am, Treehouse entrance
- 28 August** **Wednesday Friends AGM 7.30pm in the Treehouse**
- 15 - 29 Sept** *Spring Festival*
- 15 Sept** Open Day & Native Plant Sale Otari-Wilton's Bush
- 17 – 23 Sept** Clean Up New Zealand Week
- 21 Sept** Arboriculture Assoc. Tree Climbing Competition
- 29 Sept** Tulip Sunday, "Orchids For Everyone" guided walk
- 16 - 24 Nov** Rose Week - Lady Norwood Rose Garden

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