

Featuring: *Pinetum Event*
Autumn Palette
A Gaggle of Guides



The ancient *Ginkgo biloba* has a variegated month and shows us not to scoff at yellow when seeking stunning autumn tones. We've ferreted out a few more autumnal delights for your consideration.

As for trees that will still have their leaves come July's end, we invite you to a fun and informative event that starts amid the evergreens in the Pinetum.

PRESIDENT'S PATCH

Dear Members

I am pleased to report progress on several fronts in our campaign for new signage and walkways -

- Proposals for interpretative walks through the heritage native bush areas have been completed and presented to David Sole, Manager of the Garden. A summary is included in this Newsletter;
- David has told us that the long awaited signage being designed for the James Hector Pinetum, to complement the new entrances we commissioned, should be completed shortly;
- New maps are expected to be installed soon at the Cable Car and Glenmore Street entrances;
- Action in response to our submissions regarding additional directional and interpretative signage on the Downhill Path is under way;
- Proposals for new signage at the Lady Norwood Rose Garden have been approved.

Implementation of these initiatives, together with new brochures specifically tailored to assist visitors to navigate the various walks, will significantly enhance enjoyment and understanding of the Garden.

In this Newsletter we bring to your attention two upcoming events. On 28 July we will be honoured by a visit to the Garden by the Governor General, His Excellency the Honourable Anand Satyanand PCNZM, and Mrs Susan Satyanand. Following the "tradition" established by his three predecessors, the Governor General will plant a pine tree in the Pinetum area. Information on a programme for that day is set out on page 4. We hope this event will be of interest to, and supported by, many members. Your Committee is also working on another event relating to the native bush remnants in the Garden. Further information will be sent to members when final decisions are made.

Please note in your diaries that the Annual General Meeting will be held from 7pm on **Thursday 6 September** at the Treehouse. Notice of the meeting and relevant papers will be sent to Members with our next Newsletter in early August.

We include in this Newsletter subscription renewal notices, and a request for your views on how you would like to receive your Newsletters in the future. No changes will be made until after the August issue, but it will be very helpful to receive your responses now to permit appropriate planning.

Ted Woodfield

Botanic Bulletin

There is always a 'comfort' about this time of the year as the autumn colours intensify, the leaves start to drop, the bright colours of the summer bedding are removed and the damp but luscious smells of the autumn garden begin. It always strikes me that some of the most powerful and memorable experiences of gardens are through the autumn and winter.

We have recently appointed Jude Gillies as our new Visitor Services Officer. Jude has launched straight into planning for Spring Festival and will be working with the Friends

on their contribution to the programme. With a background in parks and in journalism, Jude brings some real strengths to the position. We will shortly be advertising for a Retail & Functions Manager, with Rachael Kenny having tendered her resignation to move to north. Rachael has done some great work behind the scenes with the shop, which will allow us to better manage our stock in the future.

On behalf of Botanic Gardens of Australia & New Zealand -NZ the Botanic Garden hosted

an Integrated Pest Management seminar in March as part of the professional development programme. Limited to 12 people, it was very much a hands-on seminar and was attended by botanic gardens staff from throughout the country. We had some very positive feedback from the seminar, which is testament not only to Rob Lucas, who led the programme, but also to the skills and understanding of IPM by our own staff and their ability to articulate that knowledge. I'm very proud of the staff and IPM programme in the garden and the fact that it is seen as an industry leader amongst the Botanic Gardens. To that end, I have recently had the pleasure of sponsoring nursery Curator Kate Kidman for a Green Ribbon Award which recognises contributions to environmental sustainability.

Projects continuing around the gardens include

- New mapboards – the graphics for these are developing well and I am now at the stage of conferring with the guides before final authorisation
- Interpretive signs – the text writing and construction of the signs are almost complete. Graphics development will get underway shortly for signs in the pinetum, adjacent to the black maire seedlings and for two of the forest areas
- Nursery & Operations Centre redevelopment – while we haven't quite made the progress I would have liked it is coming together and is almost ready for application for a resource consent. The key stakeholders, including the Friends, will be consulted prior to the application being made. The first stage will be the replacement of the glasshouses, cold and shade houses. All going well, we expect to start construction in May 2008.

I recently attended an amenity horticulture advisory group meeting in Christchurch, to

address increasing concerns about the standard of training and qualifications in the industry. At a March BGANZ meeting there was a long discussion around the loss of craftsmanship from the industry and how we might address this. Speaking with the heads of other botanic gardens, it is becoming increasingly harder to recruit staff with strong curatorial abilities. I think we had some positive outcomes from the Christchurch meeting, which will see more industry focus on the content of qualifications and the bar raised on the quality of industry trainees' learning.

The Botanic Garden Café closed on 30 April with the expiry of the lease. We have been caught in the unfortunate position of a preferred tenderer withdrawing at the very last minute, which has meant we have effectively had to restart the process. Compass Group indicated that they did not wish to extend their current lease with the result that the café will be closed for some months. We are working towards the earliest possible appointment of a new operator in anticipation of reopening in Spring.

Work has continued on maintenance of the forest areas of the garden, with further removals of *Pittosporum crassifolium* from the Salamanca slope and karaka from the Glen Slope. Further revegetation plantings will shortly get underway, which will be concentrated on the last of the buffer plantings and providing cover where weed trees have been removed. The Conservation Corps have recently been working on the Druid hill slope, removing broom and tree lucerne, as we begin recovering this area from its weed infestations.

I hope you take the opportunity to enjoy the autumn garden as much as I do!

David Sole
Manager Botanic Gardens of Wellington

Membership Renewal

... is due 1 July.

Membership secretary Florence de Ruiter would appreciate the return of the entire form with payment. We are giving members the option of receiving future newsletters via conventional mail or via the website.

Do you have any friends/colleagues that have an interest in the Garden and would like to join up? Now's the time to talk them into it.

Friends Special Event

28 JULY 2007 - AT THE JAMES HECTOR PINETUM

- * **Governor General to plant a pine tree**
- * **“Opening” of new entrances and signage**
- * **Guided tour, followed by**
- * **Workshop at the Treehouse on past and future development of the Pinetum.**

Development of the Pinetum, as recognition of the contribution to the Botanic Garden of the founding Manager and Director, Sir James Hector, has been a major interest of the Friends for several years.

A special feature has been the planting of pine trees by Governors General, recalling the role of the Governor of the Colony of New Zealand as Chairman of the Botanic Garden Board, from the passage of the Botanic Garden Act in 1869 until management was vested in the Wellington City Council in 1891. This practice was instituted in 1992 by the Hon. Dame Catherine Tizard and followed in 2004 by the Rt.Hon. Sir Michael Hardie Boys and the Rt.Hon. Dame Silvia Cartwright.”

We are pleased to announce that His Excellency The Honourable Anand Satyanand, PCNZM, has accepted our invitation to continue the “tradition” and will come to the Garden on Saturday 28 July to plant a pine tree and unveil a plaque. He will be accompanied by Her Excellency Susan Satyanand. The ceremony will commence at 9.30am.

Following the departure of their Excellencies at about 10am, we propose to mark the construction of the two new entrances of the Pinetum and new signage that should be installed by this time; conduct a guided tour; and then walk down to the Treehouse for morning tea and a workshop on the past and future development of the Pinetum. We will invite Garden staff and outside experts on conifers to contribute. The event should conclude by 1pm.

All members are invited to attend this significant day for the Society and the Garden. We will send out a reminder notice with additional details of the programme closer to the event.



PROPOSAL FOR BUSH WALKS

The first phase of our bush walks project was completed in March, when the Committee approved a set of proposals for interpretative walks through the heritage native bush areas of the Garden. They have now been submitted to the Manager, David Sole, for decision.

In our letter to David we pointed out, "As you know, the concept of interpretative bush walks has been under consideration by the Friends for several years. We believe that such walks will considerably enhance the visitor appeal of the Garden, and support the educational, heritage, and environmental interests of the Wellington community. Our recent work has been designed to move discussion from the theoretical to the practical. We have sought to clarify options and establish a basis on which the scope and costs of a completed project can be determined."

The proposals encompass routes and signage for three self guided walks, and the content for an associated brochure. These were based on studies undertaken by consultants Barbara Mitcalfe and Chris Horne. Funding support was received under the Wellington City Council Environmental Grants programme.

The three walks proposed are

One - Cable Car to Main Garden

The route would be Gorse Path, Kew Way, Horseshoe Bend Path, Mamaku Way, William Bramley Drive, Main Garden.

Two - Rose Garden to Treehouse

The route would be Serpentine Way, Junction Way, Camellia Path, Ruru Path, Nursery Glen Path, Treehouse.

Three - Glen Slope area

The route would be Aka Path, Rangiora Path, Fern Hill Path, Hinau Path, Aka Path.

For each walk we have set out proposed sites for interpretative signage and content for those signs. In our letter we note:

"In preparing these plans we have been guided by the principles set out in our letter on signage issues sent to you on 30 March 2006. (Published in our May 2006 Newsletter -Ed.) These included that signage in the Garden should assist visitors to navigate easily and safely; impart adequate and relevant information and be as unobtrusive as possible consistent with its purpose. We would add that in this exercise we have sought to avoid any unnecessary duplication within each separate walk.

We added:

"Our proposals regarding the content of the interpretative signs are indicative only and do not purport to be final texts. Decisions regarding the size and style for the signs will be needed before drafting can commence.

A key issue for decision will be the use of common and/or botanical names for the identified plants. We would be interested to learn if there is any WCC template on this issue. Other signage issues will be the possible use of pictorials as well as written text, and linkage with the brochure text."

We have advised David that we regard Walks One and Two as the first priority. Walk Three contains some special features, but could be looked at after the other two.

While we have presented Walks One and Two separately, we consider it would be feasible and desirable for linkage to be created between them in route signage and brochures. This would be designed to permit those interested to proceed easily from one to the other.

The Brochure

The preparation of a brochure on the Walks is an essential part of the project. We have proposed that the brochure contain

- a background note on Wellington's indigenous vegetation, past and present;

- Map of the garden showing the Walks;
- Guidance on path markers; steepness; time to cover, and linkage with other Garden sites (eg Treehouse, toilets, café) and other walks;
- Main trees/plants – common, Maori and botanical names;
- Brief description of each Walk and additional information not included on the interpretative panels. This could include ecological comments; biota information (glowworms, dragon flies, birds) and other items of interest;
- Acknowledgements.

David has told the Committee that he supports the proposals in principle, though he did have some concerns about the number of signs envisaged. We have indicated our willingness to discuss all aspects of the proposals, and anticipate that consultations will commence this month.

The Committee expresses its thanks to Barbara and Chris for their work, and to the Wellington City Council for the funding support received.

Ted

A Splash of Colour

Whilst we tend to think that it isn't cold enough in Wellington for the stunning autumn colours seen in Otago, Phil Tomlinson and Charmaine Scott have been mightily impressed by the gorgeous hues in our BG, and, with Peter Tijssen's help, came up with some choices that will brighten up your own autumn gardens.

Many overseas visitors comment on the lack of colour in our trees during the year. Evergreen trees predominate our landscape and only in some areas do we see the vibrant autumn colours, a feature of many overseas countries.

Our Garden is fortunate in that we have many specimens of exotic trees introduced from the 1870's that have grown into magnificent specimens. These, mostly northern hemisphere trees, are mostly deciduous, displaying lovely autumn colours, especially when viewed against our dark native foliage. The view in autumn makes a visit to the Garden well worthwhile.

Autumn tones can be seen throughout the garden. The brilliant red and yellow of the maples and the gold of the ash can be seen in several areas. The beautiful red-brown of the swamp cypress is striking, in marked contrast to the pale green new leaves of spring. Later, the two-toned colour of the *Ginkgo biloba* is an arresting sight. Stand by the Duck Pond and the view of the copper beech, swamp cypress, maples, elms, ash and oaks are a sight to behold. Just pray that the wind keeps down to preserve the leaves on the trees for as long as possible. Horseshoe Bend is another area that displays its colours well, but trees tucked away in many locations will delight and surprise. Not

all trees show their colour at the same time



and the change over some weeks makes for an ever-varying spectacle.

We are fortunate to have a range of trees in our Garden that give us a sample of what those in the northern hemisphere consider the norm. Many are large trees that no longer can be grown on our small urban sections and while our native bush is 'flavour of the month' for much of the country, the retention of the specimen exotics is of increasing importance in giving visitors the ability to view and admire those trees that they can only read about in overseas publications. They are a fundamental part of a botanic garden, showing another face of plant diversity, and the autumn view IS something special.

One of the most stunning autumn trees is the swamp cypress, *Taxodium distichum* (shown previous page). Related to the mighty Sequoia, its generic name refers to (*taxos* the yew and *eidos* meaning resembling) the similarity in the shape of its leaves to those of the yew.

The Swamp Cypress (sometimes called the Bald Cypress) is an important timber tree of the coastal swamps in the southeastern USA, and develops unique "knees", curious cone-shaped structures that grow from the root system upwards to above the water level, but which are absent when it grows in dry soil. These growths are thought to allow the tree to breathe with its root system submerged.

It is a fast growing tree in the wild reaching 38 m (120 feet), but it is smaller in cultivation. In winter the tree sheds not only its needles but also the short stalks to which they are attached. Before the leaves fall they turn a beautiful red-brown colour. It has lovely light green, feathery new foliage in the spring.

This is a long lived tree, one specimen assessed to be 1,622 years old. It is a valuable timber tree; light, soft, not strong, moderately hard, easily worked, straight grained, very durable in damp soil and takes a good polish. The wood is not given to excessive warping or shrinking. The knees are frequently used for curved members of wooden boats and the bark has been used to make cordage ("cords or ropes, as in the rigging of a ship" - I'm sure you all know what it means, but I had to look it up. -Ed).

Although the swamp cypress can be grown in wet soils and shallow water, it thrives in any soil and trees actually grow faster in normal unflooded soils. Established plants succeed in standing water up to 60cm deep and it tolerates atmospheric pollution. It's a superb specimen tree in the BG but is probably not suitable for the smaller suburban section.

Prunus often shine at both ends of winter; some of the flowering cherry varieties colour up well in autumn and are so easy to grow. The BG has several, mainly *P. x yedoensis* and *P. campanulata*. Of the more modern hybrids, *P. x yedoensis* 'Awanui' is an exceptionally good doer and well-behaved. It has pale pink blossoms and is a very popular and effective 'avenue' tree – it is a sight to behold along country driveways.

Birds love *Prunus campanulata* nectar. 'Pink Cloud' has soft pink single blossoms and 'Okame' has the double attractions of bright rose blossoms in spring and orange leaves in autumn.



A good old-fashioned *Prunus* is *P. Sato-zakura* 'Shirotae' (meaning snow white), the 'Mt Fuji' cherry. Covered in divine almond-scented double white blooms, it is hard to think of a more beautiful tree, but beware, it has a spreading form and needs much horizontal space when mature (it regularly takes over the clothesline at your Editor's place), but in a good year, carries lovely yellow-orange-warm brown falling leaves.

And there's much more to choose from.

Other items of autumn interest that are in the BG and could just as easily be in your garden include the smaller-growing *Acer* varieties (Japanese maples) if you have a bit of shelter; *Berberis thunbergii* and *B. thunbergii* 'Aurea'; Purple smoke bush *Cotinus coggyria*; golden ash, *Fraxinus excelsior* 'Aurea'; *Ginkgo biloba*; Persian Ironwood, *Parrotia persica*; *Azalea mollis* varieties and even the humble Hydrangea. Worth seeking out is Shadbush, *Amelanchier canadensis* – a shrub/tree growing to 10 metres. Graceful and wide-branching, its flowers in spring are white racemes followed by purple-black fruit. The BG *Amelanchiers* are really quite slow growers and staff estimate it would take a hundred years for them to reach 10 metres. You would

prune them only occasionally to keep at the desired height.

The Treehouse showcases a couple of vigorous climbers that colour up well in autumn: our native Three Kings 'honeysuckle' *Tecomanthe speciosa* (also glorious in spring) and the Virginia creeper, *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*. (Try saying that quickly. You can only be grateful, sometimes, that plants have common names.)

As special as it is, we do not recommend copper beech for the suburban garden; unless you have an acre or so to spare, it simply grows far too big.



This vivid maple is behind the duck pond. Photos by Phil Tomlinson & Charmaine Scott

Cuttings

♣ Curator Herbs & Perennials, Dale Such reports, "I was speaking to Graham, one of the gardeners from the city, and he was telling me that one of the beach sweepers from Oriental Bay picked up a small piece of black wood with white writing on it. Not knowing what it was, he handed it to Graham, who knew exactly what it was. It was one of the plant labels from the Botanic Garden. Every now and then when we get a downpour at the Garden some of our labels get washed away down to the Pipitea Stream and into the harbour. As this one then washed up onto the beach at Oriental Bay, it makes you wonder where some of them must get to. As I write this I'm wondering just how many of my labels are currently floating round the Pacific."

♣ 26,000-odd tulips have been planted for the usual spring show and in case you've wondered how long that takes, on a good day around 7,500 bulbs get planted.

A Gaggle of Guides



Who are these people who greet Botanic Garden visitors and who lead the monthly guided walks and why are they doing it? Through this newsletter we've met 'chief' guides Phil Tomlinson and Jenny Hickman – their passion shines out – but what motivates the other 24 guides?

Phil was kind enough to provide morning tea so I could meet some of the troops and it turned out to be a much simpler – and more interesting – story than we might have expected.

During a thoroughly enjoyable chat with Sheena Bennett, Cathy Brown and Phil it transpired that happenstance had much to do with its genesis but that the main culprit was none other than Jenny Hickman. Jenny's and Cathy's daughters rode horses together when they were very young. Fast-forward some years and Jenny is in the Northland street where these three, along with guide Kath Kerr, live, and ends up talking about guiding to Cathy and Sheena, who look at each other and say, "I could do that."

Sheena had spent many an hour walking her young son through the Garden and knew every path well, so, "I just thought I'd stand there and tell people where to go," she recalls. How wrong can you be? "I felt I owed the Garden something," she explained, "but I didn't realise I'd have to think and go to seminars and

training sessions," she continued. "I didn't even know the names of many trees." In fact, many of the guides do not have a botanical background – Phil's is agricultural, Sheena is a maths teacher and Cathy a biochemist and ex-DSIR forensic scientist – but they all share an interest in "things" and, probably more importantly, people.

Guiding is rarely about having a deep commitment to matters botanical. These guides have a wide range of interests and hobbies. Nor do they seem to have much time on their hands, so it certainly isn't boredom that draws them into the Garden. Sheena loves fabric, sewing, auctions (we suspect she's not so much famous as infamous in this respect: she once bought over 100 watch straps, and nearly everyone in the street now has one, then there was the box of teddy bears...), and various combinations of the three friends help immigrants and refugees learn to speak English, compile and deliver Easy Meals, work in a school office on a relief basis, supervise exams at Wellington College, go to papier mache classes and were once involved with the mobile library, to name but a portion of their activities.

This group have known each other for over 20 years and really enjoy each other's company and the comfort that comes from long-standing friendship, but it's by no means an exclusive

group; any newcomer is quickly made to feel a welcome part of it.

They agree that one of the reasons the guides all get along is that they have diverse interests and knowledge, "and a bit of a brain," so there is always something to talk about. They all have their own strengths and knowledge-bases but they say that as a group, they cover almost all the angles (there's even an entomologist-guide). They say that initially it can be quite intimidating facing having to talk about the garden and its treasures, but that although you can only give out what you know, there are ways around the tricky questions. One technique Phil uses is to ask if anyone in the group knows the answer. If all else fails, "I look for someone in green," he said. No, not leprechauns, but actual Garden staff members. The guides are unanimous in their admiration for the willingness of staff to answer questions and for how hugely knowledgeable they are.

Some guides are good at leading and some at being 'Tail-end Charlie', so there's a role for everyone. Sheena said that she felt she actually had more freedom as Tail-end Charlie. While the leader has to keep everyone moving along, the tail-end guide often has the time to chat to stragglers and people who, being at the back, may not have heard the leader well.

The guides say they rarely get "no questions" at the end of a walk and subsequent discussions can be quite wide-ranging. The cable car 'position' elicits some very interesting

comments and questions and where once only a few would get off the cable car for a walk down through the Garden, now most do. Phil has noticed that the cruise ships have a lot of repeat customers. he asked one of them about this and was told "Our children pay for us to go away for three months every year; they want us out of their hair." Don't bother trying this at home - your children are unlikely to be as keen on the idea.

Back onto the 'why be a guide?' question, Sheena came up with a simple answer. "This is the reason we are guides," she said, "They are a really nice group of slightly odd people." As a consequence, "You can always find something to talk about," Cathy noted.

They even started to work their magic on me. They are a very friendly, interesting, stimulating bunch of people who get immense satisfaction out of interacting with the folks they show around the Garden and thus can have you all but agreeing to follow them down the Garden path before you know what's hit you.

Who gets more out of Garden guiding – the guides or the guided? According to Sheena, "I think we actually gain from it." "I know we gain from it," added Cathy.

If you want to hang out with this neat bunch of people give Phil a ring on 475 8765 or talk to convenor Jenny Hickman on 383 6561

Glow Worm Tours



Please note these dates are subject to confirmation and to sufficient glow worm numbers and weather conditions.

Phone the Treehouse Visitors Centre 04 499 1400 or, on the day, the Wellington City Council Contact Centre 499 4444

Friday 8th June 7.30 p.m.

Friday 6th July 7.30 p.m.

Friday 3rd August 7.30 p.m.

Friday 7th September 8 p.m.

Friday 5th October 8.30 p.m.

For groups of 10 or more people, please contact the Treehouse for your own tour on an evening other than a scheduled tour.



The **Friends of the Wellington Botanic Garden** welcome you to this web site and this fascinating public garden.



New Zealand's most historic public botanic garden is located in the heart of Wellington, the Capital City of New Zealand. It is classified as a **Garden of National Significance** by the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture and is an **Historic Places Trust Heritage Area**

Located within walking distance of the commercial and shopping heart of the City, it is only a short distance from the National Museum - Te Papa.

The most spectacular entry is by Cable Car. Leaving from Lambton Quay, the main shopping street, it terminates at the lookout entry to the Garden, which provides spectacular views over the city and the harbour. Return to the city by walking the downhill path back to the city heart, through the children's play area, Main Garden with its old trees, Duck Pond, and seasonal plantings, to the Rose Garden and Begonia House.



This panel is an extract from
the Friends web site.
Have you visited it yet?

www.friends.wbg.org.nz

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A special web only supplement available on the Friends web site

friendswbq.org.nz

Features more photographs on the autumn colour in the Garden