

President's Patch

Dear Members,

This is my last letter to you, as I stand down after five years as your President. I have appreciated the opportunity to serve the society. I thank all members of the committee for the way they have worked together as a great team on the varying interests and activities of the Friends.

At the Annual General Meeting on Saturday 26 September, as well as electing a new committee and office holders, members will have the opportunity to put forward their suggestions for the future direction of the society. Our focus in recent years has been to seek to engage the attention of the Wellington City Council on the significance of the Botanic Garden for the residents of and visitors to the City, and the need for adequate funding; and to work in close cooperation with the management on projects to enhance the visitor appeal of the Garden. At the same time we have maintained and expanded the roles of our Guides and Hosts and arranged social and educational events for members.

Should these continue as major activities or are there other interests we should be pursuing?

It is clear that in coming years significant new challenges will need to be faced. The pressure on resources available for the upkeep, let alone development, of the Garden means that hard decisions will need to be made on priorities. The Society can contribute to discussion on such issues from the viewpoint of the users of the Garden, but only if we are truly representative. All of us have a responsibility for encouraging the involvement of others as members of the Friends. It would be good, in particular, to have younger people on our committee and participating in our activities.

The AGM is an occasion for you to express your views on these issues. Following the formal meeting you will also have the privilege of hearing a presentation by our guest speaker, the distinguished Dutch bulb grower, Jan Pennings. I look forward to seeing you at the Treehouse on Saturday 26 September at 10.00am.

Ted Woodfield

Botanic Bulletin

Spring Festival is coming up very quickly. Another great programme promises another great event in the Garden. With Conservation week put back to September this year Otari is again involved with the programme with open day – and the plant sale – on 19 September. Curator/Manager Rewi Elliot and his team have been making a number of improvements to the collections which are well worth seeing, as well as hosting a great programme for the day.

I have been wondering why it has been quieter at my office in the mornings. James Jones tells me all the kaka have been on the *Prunus campanulata* near the Cable Car lookout. He counted eleven on it yesterday morning. However they are not his favourite animal at present as they seem to be damaging the trees in the James Hector Pinetum by stripping the bark. This has caused the top of one of the smaller trees to die out. Kaka aside, the trees in the pinetum have started to show some good growth and there is a definite sense of purpose evolving in this part of the garden. The views from this under-visited

area are always special, with a particularly intriguing one to Druid Hill, where Andrew Drummond's Listening and Viewing device sits very mysteriously.

We have removed two trees from the bank above the Soundshell. The celery pine (tanekaha) and a pohutukawa. Both trees were in decline, with the pohutukawa also having decay in its stems. Their removal has opened up the view to the magnificent *Eucalyptus oblique* at the top of the bank. The trees will be replaced with magnolias, both completing the line across the bank and following through with the magnolias around the Soundshell and William Bramley Drive. Also removed were two declining *Chamaecyparis* from the Glenmore lawn. This has opened up the view along the lawn and created an illusion of increased space.

Our five year update of the 2004 Collections Review is continuing. It gives me great pleasure to see that a great many of the recommendations of the review are now in place and the feedback



I have been receiving reinforces the work the staff have done in embracing the recommendations and spirit of the review. While there will always be aspects of the garden to improve, the emphasis this time will move towards monitoring and reporting.

We have received the first reports from the survey conducted in March. I am very pleased to say that from a possible score of 7, the Botanic Garden scored 6.5 and Otari 6.7. What was pleasing to see was that overseas visitors were still sitting at 45%. The comparative figures for

the other gardens participating in the survey will be available early in 2010. We have also been counting the numbers of visitors which came to just under 800,000 this year. However, the presence of spiders and wetas setting up camp in the counter recesses on the posts has caused an under-reporting I suspect.

I look forward to seeing you all at Spring Festival for the Friends' meeting and particularly for Jan Pennings' talk.

David Sole

Downhill Path Interpretive Signs

The front cover features two of the four recently-installed downhill path signs, which explain what can be seen from each spot and tell visitors a little of the Garden's fascinating history. If you want to see the other two signs you will have to come to the Garden!

Pinus radiata in New Zealand

In July Frances Verrity organised a talk by Dr W.R.J (Wink) Sutton, a man with a long history with New Zealand's timber industry – and a self-confessed radiata pine enthusiast. It is a historic and fascinating story - here we share a few morsels of it.

Guest speaker Wink Sutton was introduced by Ted Verrity, who in turn introduced himself as being "better known as Frances's husband." Ted first met Wink in 1958, when they were both teenagers; they developed a shared passion for the card game 500 and claim to have been unbeaten for 2½ years.

Wink gained a BSc from Victoria University in the early 1960s, followed by a BA in Forest Management, Oxford. He was employed as a scientist in the Forestry Research Institute and, in the mid-1970s, completed a doctorate, concentrating on New Zealand's forestry export potential. He joined Fletcher Forest and was later seconded to the Canadian Forest Service. He retired in 1997.

Wink began his talk by pointing out that *Pinus radiata*, *Pinus insignis*, Monterey pine and Remarkable pine are all the same species.

The reason radiata pine does so well in the Rotorua area is that the latitude is the same as California. It is the fastest-growing tree in North

America. Comparing radiata to other species, most trees have an internal seasonal clock, programmed for dormancy in winter and a spring growth-start, growing for a predetermined number of days before stopping again. For instance the Siberian larch 'clock' runs for 85 days, so if there are warm days in autumn after it has stopped growing it may start again – then be killed by frost.

Radiata's 'clock', however, works on an hourly basis, with growth occurring almost every day of the year. In Rotorua, the 'clock' stops for only about three weeks, when the temperature is below five degrees.

Unlike other trees, radiata doesn't move sugars to the rest of the tree at sundown, it also needs a corresponding two-degree temperature drop to do so. Nights are warm in the tropics so there, radiata grows all night too and as a consequence, never forms branches properly. Because it almost never stops growing, it can be susceptible to frosts too (frost gets through the bark and into cambial cells and "blows them apart").

In 1840 land use proportions were 55% natural forest, 26% non-productive land and 19% Maori cleared land (mostly by fire). *Pinus radiata* was probably first introduced into New Zealand in the 1850s, but first recorded at Barhill in 1857 – some of those trees were felled in 1877.

Pre-1880 exports were sealskins, wool and gold. In 1882 the first frozen sheepmeat was exported. As a result of the ability to export frozen meat, there was a major conversion of forest to farmland but less than 10% of the cleared wood was used – most was burnt or piled up to rot. This had the unfortunate effect of giving the impression of an inexhaustible wood supply.

In 1896 the Government Afforestation branch concluded that it was unrealistic to use indigenous trees as they were too slow-growing, some taking well in excess of 100 years to mature; introduced trees grew 10 times faster. The first exotic to be trialled was the European larch, *Larix decidua*. At this time the Chief Forester deemed the three most-undesirable exotics to be *Pinus radiata*, *Cupressus macrocarpa* and redwoods!! He said that radiata was “of little value except as firewood.”

In 1913 a Royal Commission on Forestry was set up, running for six months and involving much travel (of course, there was no plane travel then). The commissioners talked to everyone in the industry, including millers and builders, and asked what the future needs for timber were thought to be. “Houses and butter and cheese crates,” came the answer. Durable wood would also be needed, for posts, poles, cattleyards and fences. As wood preservatives such as copper-chrome-arsenic and boron were not yet discovered, durable hardwoods like eucalypts were trialled. The Commission noted that radiata grows fast and was thus ideal for houses and box-making. They had inspected 37-year old houses built from Barhill plantation wood and found them to be still completely sound, and so concluded that New Zealand should give priority to growing *Pinus radiata*.

The next task was to get the public to accept “knotty” pine while clear, indigenous timber was still readily available. The state set up two demonstration sawmills, at Waipa and Conehill,

and the aforementioned preservatives were introduced. Perhaps remarkably, the least durable timber is the most effectively treated and by extension, the most durable least treatable. The final clincher is that no natural timber outlasts that which has been treated.

Years were spent experimenting and refining plantation management – how and when to thin and prune and the calculation of stocking rates. The decade from 1925 saw the first planting boom and by the end of the 1930s New Zealand had enough plantation stock to supply all the country’s foreseeable timber needs.

In 1957 the first log exports to Japan went out and New Zealand growers were exposed to international timber prices – Japan paid ten times the price from Tasman Pulp & Paper Mill. There was no looking back after that revelation.

In the 1960s Wink and Bob Fenton proposed a new regime, based on research studies and yield models, that included lower stocking, earlier pruning, heavier and earlier thinning and clear-felling trees at age 26 years. At the time Wink and Bob were “ridiculed by everyone”, but now this is the way forests are managed.

An interesting aside – needles also have to be pruned off the trunk too, if original branches are pruned off, or they can themselves develop into branches which would need later pruning (in an unpruned tree these needles’ bud cells don’t develop).

In one century the country has gone from an almost 100% indigenous wood supply to that which is almost 100% exotic plantation timber. But while forestry is still New Zealand’s number one export, “we are now felling more forests than we are creating,” says Wink. New areas of planting have declined – some forest land is being converted to dairy farms, “and there is nothing that makes me wilder.”

Wink did not comment on the role the Botanic Garden pines have played in New Zealand’s timber industry – he said he was not aware of this history. Ed.

Spring Festival 2009



Here's a sneak preview of what we're up to with this year's Botanic Garden and Otari-Wilton's Bush Spring Festival.

The focus has changed slightly this year – Spring Festival only covers one week of the school holidays. Adults' activities were not well-attended last year and anecdotal evidence suggests that this may be because parents have children to mind during school hol's. Children's events were, by contrast, very well-attended; it would seem that the city's parents and child-minders are desperate for low-cost or free holiday entertainment. Last year we did not advertise in family/kids' magazines and there was no reduction in numbers attending children's events.

So, for the grown-ups this year, we have some great events, starting with Otari-Wilton's Bush open day and plant sale (19 Sept), which is back under the Spring Festival umbrella. If you haven't been to this yet, it's a great chance to get well-priced, well-grown native plants and to check out the delights of this unique native botanic garden.

The following day (20 Sept) we are trying something new – a Grow Your Own workshop, with Richard Nanson and the 2008 Gardener of the Year Sister Loyola – two of the best vege growers around. The initial idea was to help refugees and migrants learn about what grows well in Wellington and how to go about having your own vege patch – even if you don't have a garden, but really, this workshop will be of interest to nearly everyone! We'll have a worm farm expert and Garden staff on-hand too for free advice. Commonsense Organics and Bunnings

Lyll Bay have been very generous in supporting this event.

If you work near the Garden, get a team of six together and give the Business House Challenge a go (12.15pm Tuesday 22 Sept). It's a speed-scavenger hunt, but speediest doesn't always get the prize. You have to get the answers right too!

Of course, a number of Friends will want to know what we are putting on for the kids. There are daily events for them and the programme brochure is available early next month, from libraries, Council reception, the Treehouse or you can download it from www.friendswbg.org.nz. And since the zoo originated in the Botanic Garden we'll be running a cool "critter trail" scavenger hunt for the kids and a couple of animal-themed guided walks.

The guides have put a great programme of walks together especially for Spring Festival – check these out under Coming Events on the back pages. There are also twice-weekly guided walks round Otari-Wilton's Bush and trips to the Colonial Cottage Museum garden, the regional tree-climbing contest, a concert in the Cable Car Museum, two-for-one entry to Zealandia and a fabulous Culture Connection picnic-concert on the last day, featuring music and dance from around the world.

Ed, AKA Spring Festival organiser

World Rose Convention Vancouver 2009

The Friends gave Lady Norwood Rose Garden curator Rachel Solomon assistance to attend this international rose convention. She says she got much out of the trip - a bonus was being able to catch up again with international colleagues she had met in Glasgow in 2003.

We all arrived safely and early and the taxi ride (one hour in rush hour traffic) from the airport was an interesting introduction to the city of Vancouver. Most notable was that everyone who had a hedge used conifers of one form or another. The first day of the convention was a tour around Vancouver in a luxury coach, with a driver who had repertoire of bad jokes.



Stanley Park was our first stop. We strolled through the rose garden critiquing the roses and although they were small compared to ours, they still put on a good display. We also stopped to look at the totem poles gifted by the First Nation people. The trees were mainly cedars and hemlocks.

The city is made up of tower blocks, divided between businesses and apartment dwellers, and there is a rule that doesn't allow buildings to be built close to each other. All the glass reflects the backdrop of the hills, sea and sky and gives an open feeling to it. There were not a lot of park areas but buildings are encouraged to have green roofs - planted up with a small garden of some kind. The main park area is along the waterfront, where heaps of people sit a Stanley Park was our first stop. We strolled through the rose garden critiquing the roses and although they were small compared to ours, they still put on a good display. We also stopped to look at the totem poles gifted by the First Nation people. The trees were mainly cedars and hemlocks.

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Every city has a Chinatown and our driver had a soft spot for a little old Chinese paper seller. Her only word of English was "happy" which I thought was not a bad way to think. We were deposited at Granville Island Public Markets to enjoy our packed lunch and have a look around at the locally made handcrafts. Later a group of us visited the Rose Festival and Rose Show - the first event to be held in the newly-built Vancouver Convention Centre.

The plants were displayed under low lights and misted to help them stay fresh for the three days of the show, but this meant it was a little cold for the visitors. We saw some interesting interpretations of floral display and wide use of the older, heritage roses in their classes. We all liked the vases that they used to display the roses. Three New Zealanders had entered and all won prizes, either first or second.



Memphis Music in the show – might we be seeing this in the BG next year?

Day two - the lectures started. It was a bit of a juggling act to decide which lectures to attend, as they ran two at the same time. Since I still felt a little bit jet-lagged, I decided to miss the first lecture and go down in time to hear Claire Laberge from the Montreal Botanic Garden. Her lecture was about how they started and implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM) at the MBG. Next was Alec Globe, talking about the history of roses in Canada. Finally, Patrick White gave a tribute to Dr Felicitas Svejda, who was a scientist employed by the government to investigate cold-hardy roses. She was responsible for the Explorer series of roses – similar to Flower Carpets.



After all these interesting talks it was time for another outing to awaken the senses. This time we went off for a tour of the Centennial Rose Garden in Burnaby Mountain Park.



It is a tranquil setting and the view back towards the city a perfect backdrop. Once again the roses didn't compare so well with ours, but they still put on a good display. Then we went to New Westminster and the recently redeveloped gardens of the Herb House Rose Garden at Queen's Park.

This is a tiny garden in a lovely area. They were celebrating 125 years. I couldn't help but feel sorry for the roses when I discovered that they are under about one metre of snow over winter. This was not a normal Vancouver winter. Most of the pruned roses got crushed under the weight of the snow. No wonder they struggle to get to any decent height, but they all looked very clean and healthy. I asked one of the staff members what was their secret and he said that they hadn't had any rain for at least 21 days so no fungus could spread. Don't panic - they do get watered, with an underground leaky pipe system.

The final garden on this tour was Queen Elizabeth Park – every city seems to have one of these also! The fountain there was a popular place on the day for grand aunts' photos and there was a lovely sunken garden, planted up with annuals and perennials. The rose gardens here were a little disappointing due to being a bit of a hodge-podge mix of roses, annuals and perennials. One comment was "that it looked like something had died and they'd just replaced it with something close to hand".

The next day of lectures included Doug Grant from New Zealand, giving a presentation on the many NZ rose gardens. Peter Beales talked about Classic roses in the garden landscape. He talked about using roses as companion plants and said that shrub roses can sometimes be used instead of climbers, as some are as vigorous. However, one shouldn't assume that because something is new it is not necessarily better. A classic rose is a rose that you can place in any border that doesn't scream back at you.

Markuis Brunzing talked about new trends at the Baden-Baden rose trials in Germany. *Rosa* 'Apache' from Kordes won the Golden Rose award for 2009. One interesting trend is that hybrid teas are decreasing in the trial beds, possibly due to not being able to meet the requirements of disease resistance and scent. Changing climate/weather conditions have become dictators to breeders. The new colour trends seem to be pink with orange/yellow hues and purple/violet hues – Rhapsody in Blue started this trend. In the final lecture for the day, Lakshmi Sridharan talked about soil health. She believes that landscaping begins with the soil - if you have healthy soil you have healthy roses. Chemical fertilisers deliver large quantities immediately, whereas organic fertilisers deliver small amounts over time.

That afternoon a group of us went to the North Shore to take on the challenge of the Capilano Suspension Bridge - definitely not for the faint hearted.



It spans 450ft and is suspended 230ft above the Capilano River. On the other side of the bridge was a cliff-hanger walk and a tree-top walk. Once back on solid ground it was off to catch the gondola up to the misty tops of Grouse Mountain. It has been so cold that there were still pockets of snow on the ground (brrrrr). Up the top they had a couple of grizzly bears in a fenced off refuge area and some birds of prey housed, to amuse the public.

Monday saw all of us load up into school buses and head to the Tsawwassen Terminal to catch the ferry over to Vancouver Island. This was the highlight trip of the convention - three or four hours at Butchart Gardens, where there are 55 acres of floral displays.



The rose garden has over 3,500 roses. They also use IPM principles, as do most public gardens in Canada. It is too hard to describe such an amazing garden in words so I recommend you all save your pennies and head over.

One of the highlights of the ferry trip was seeing a pod of killer whales; one even leapt out of the water. It was too fast for the camera so everyone thought I imagined it.

The next day of lectures was an interesting mix. Steve Jones talked about Polyanthus roses, their relationship to modern floribundas and whether there is a relationship to miniatures. This was disproved by another member but an interesting thought as we looked at the similarities between the two types. Yuki Mikanagi and Katsuhiko Maebara talked about the City Of Sakura Rose Garden - a garden mostly built and maintained by women. Peter Boyd talked about his passion for Scots Roses. These have the widest natural distribution of any species across Europe. Finally Alain Meilland talked about their family nursery in France. They are up to the eighth generation running it. He sees his next challenge as developing roses for tropical and equatorial zones at sea level.

On the last day of the convention we listened to Per H. Salvesen talk about heritage roses found in old gardens along the coast of Norway. Finally there was a chance to meet and talk to the rose breeders - Beatrice Barni from Italy, Thomas Proll from the House of Kordes and Alain Meilland. It was an interesting discussion. Some of the things that came out of it were - the own roots vs. under stock debate (most breeders in Europe used root stock and American breeders used own roots - I think it's down to personal choice and location as to the performance of a particular rose on own roots or root stock. It seems to be an ongoing debate) and that illegal budding and selling of roses is happening in China.

What a great conference and city! It's all over but I must say it was very good to meet new people and catch up with others who all share the same interest and swap ideas. I would recommend attending the next one if you can, to be held in South Africa in 2012.



Rose show entries

Story and pix - Rachel Solomon

Coming Events

Glow in the dark glow-worm tours

Fridays, 18 and 25 Sept 8pm, 16 Oct, 9pm

Meet at the Founders' Entrance (main gates) on Glenmore Street for a one-hour journey into the world of this fascinating creature. Please bring a torch. Reasonable mobility required. Adults \$5, children under-12 free.

Spring Festival

Saturday 19 September – Sunday 4 October

Celebrating the start of the new season, with the colourful sight of thousands of tulips and other spring blooms. It's a fun-filled fortnight, including Otari-Wilton's Bush open day and plant sale on 19 September and Tulip Sunday on September 27, of walks, talks, games, stories and quests for all ages – and free daily lunchtime rides up the Cable Car. Experience the Botanic Garden at its best. Full details are in the Spring Festival brochure available at the Treehouse, Picnic cafe or your library.

Saturday 19 September, 2pm

Tiptoe through the tombstones

Join the Friends of Bolton Street Memorial Park for a stroll through Wellington's historic cemetery and hear fascinating stories about our country's founders. Bookings not required. Meet at the Seddon Memorial near Anderson Park. Cost: gold coin

Monday 21 September, 10.30am

From fibre to fashion

Thinking about your summer wardrobe? Come to the Botanic Garden and see how plants,

textiles and fashion are connected, from the familiar to the unusual. For this moderate 90-minute walk, meet at the Founders' entrance, Glenmore Street. Cost: gold coin

Wednesday 23 September, 10.30am

Papyrus, parchment and paper

Fascinating facts from the history of the evolution of paper are revealed during this easy walk. Hear about the emperor's toilet paper, the origin of paper money and more. Meet at the Botanic Garden duck pond for this easy, one-hour walk. Cost: gold coin

Friday 25 September, 10.30am

Spring is sprung

Check out the thousands of tulips and other spring delights festooning the Garden – and find out how to get the best out of your spring plants – on this moderate walk with Garden guides and a curator. Bring your camera and meet at the Founders' entrance, Glenmore Street. Cost: gold coin

Saturday 26 September, 10am

Friends WBG AGM

Come and have your say about the future direction of the Friends. You will be rewarded – following the AGM there will be an illustrated talk by renowned Dutch bulb grower and Keukenhof garden vice-chairman Jan Pennings.

Contd.

**Sunday 27 September 11.30am-3pm
TULIP SUNDAY**

Enjoy the sight of 26,000 tulips in flower, great food, Dutch culture and other entertainment at this iconic Wellington event.

**Tuesday 29 September, 10.30am
Pythons puff adders and pumas – kids' walk**

In the Botanic Garden? Not really, but something similar *may* be lurking. Children must be accompanied by an adult and bookings are essential for this special kids' 90-minute guided walk. Phone the Treehouse on 499 1400 to book and meet at the Cable Car entrance – the walk finishes at the Begonia House. Cost: gold coin

**Wednesday 30 September, 10.30am
Papyrus, parchment and paper – kids' walk**

Fascinating facts about how people first made notes. Hear about the emperor's toilet paper, the origin of paper money and more. This easy guided walk is followed by a paper-making demonstration. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Meet at the Botanic Garden duck pond – the walk ends in the Begonia House. Cost: gold coin

**Saturday 3 October, 2pm
Tiptoe through the tombstones**

Join the Friends of Bolton Street Memorial Park for a stroll through Wellington's historic cemetery and hear fascinating stories about our country's founders. Bookings not required. Meet at the Seddon Memorial near Anderson Park. Cost: gold coin

**Sunday October 18, 11am
You Can't See the Wood for the Trees**

A walk that looks at trees in the Garden and the timber products we obtain from them. Meet at the Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street for this easy 90-minute walk. Cost: gold coin

**Monday October 26, 10.30am
Early-flowering heritage roses**

Discover the early flowering heritage roses in Bolton Street Memorial Park. Meet at the Seddon Memorial entrance near Anderson Park for this easy one-hour walk. Cost: gold coin.

**Sunday November 15, 11am
The Lady Norwood Rose Garden**

Welcome in the spring with a visit to the Lady Norwood Rose Garden. Meet at the Rose Garden fountain for this easy, one-hour stroll. Cost: gold coin

**Monday November 23, 10.30am
Heritage roses and their story**

Meet at the Seddon Memorial entrance to Bolton Street Memorial Park for this easy one-hour walk. Cost: gold coin

**Rose Weekend
November 27 - 29**

Three days with the focus firmly on roses - see masses of blooms, check out the entries in the Wellington Rose Society's annual show, take a guided walk, watch painters at work and revel in the rosy atmosphere.

Friends of Wellington's Botanic Gardens, P.O. Box 28-065, Kelburn, Wellington 6150

President Ted Woodfield, phone 499 6005, email: tedwoodfield@xtra.co.nz

Secretary Frank Wilson, phone 475 7337, email: fmwilson@xtra.co.nz

Website www.friendswbg.org.nz

Newsletter Editor Charmaine Scott, phone 383 6285, email: thecats@xnet.co.nz

Typeset and printed by NS Services phone/fax 970 5036, email: gderb@ihug.co.nz