

Newsletter

May 2008

*Featuring: Vale Ted Sweetman
Guide Nonie
Hector's orchid*

Winter work....



brings spring promise

By the time you read this the planting of 25,000 tulip bulbs in the main garden will have been completed – and with that goes the hope that they will be at their glorious blooming best on Tulip Sunday September 28. This year marks the 60th anniversary of massed bulb plantings in our Garden – in 1948 the Dutch government donated, as part of a gift to the people of New Zealand, thousands of hyacinth, tulip and other bulbs to the Botanic Garden.



President's Patch

Dear Members

In my letter in the December 2007 Newsletter I commented on the need for the Wellington City Council to ensure that funding for the Botanic Garden, "matches its good intentions in meeting community expectations. The Botanic Garden cannot be taken for granted." It is with very considerable concern that we have learnt that in the draft WCC Plan for 2008/09, it is proposed that capital expenditure allocated to the Botanic Garden be reduced by \$1 million. The effect of this will be to delay long overdue work to replace the outdated and inadequate Nursery facilities.

In 2006 the Friends strongly supported financial provision for the redevelopment of the Nursery in the WCC Long-term Community Plan. We were pleased to see the project endorsed in that Plan. We are definitely not pleased to see the proposal to defer the work. We have made representations to the Council to restore the funding.

Good news received this month is advice from David Sole, Manager of the Botanic Garden, agreeing with our recently revised proposals for interpretive bush walks. This follows further intensive on-site discussions. An offer from the Friends to provide financial support for the signage and a brochure is assisting in bringing this project to fruition.

I regret that plans for a Winter Seminar this year have had to be put on hold. Your Committee will be considering the possibility of incorporating a Members' event in the Spring Festival programme.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 23 August, at 4pm. We hope this timing will prove more suitable for Members than an evening event. Papers will be sent out with our next Newsletter in early August.

Ted Woodfield.

Botanic Bulletin

Not only am I pleased to be back at the garden but it seems I have bought the rain back with me! My thanks go to Leanne and Neil who stepped up to manage the garden in such a professional way, and of course the Botanic Garden team, in my absence.

This year's capital works programme, comprising mostly of routine renewals and interpretation, is almost complete. We have bought forward some small items including light repairs and completion of the Lady Norwood Rose Garden pergola, into this financial year with the delays in proceeding with the nursery and the heritage discussions around the project.

Included in the work has been the development and installation of new interpretive signage through the garden. While the development and editing of the signs takes some time, they are proving well worth the effort, with good responses being received about the finished product. Currently the texts for the downhill walk signs are in the final stages of development and the graphics for the Lady Norwood Rose Garden signs are with the Friends for comment.

The annual walk-arounds with the curators are now complete and I'm pleased to say that excellent progress continues to be made as a result of the collections review. I continue to reflect on the willingness with which the team have taken the recommendations on and implemented them, which contributes the 'specialness' of the Botanic Garden and the ever-improving quality of the visitor experience.

Recently seven staff and myself headed up to Eastwoodhill Arboretum for an extended weekend to view the autumn colours and have a look at the way the arboretum is managed. What particularly struck me this time, and highlighted by the autumn colours, was the eclecticism of the plantings and remarkable landscape they created which could never be replicated by design. At the same time however, you quickly realise what a maintenance nightmare the curator has, as decisions are never about just one tree but five or six. When compared to Hackfalls Arboretum nearby – well, almost – Bob Berry certainly learnt some lessons and there is a much more ordered park-like landscape celebrating the trees as individual specimens. For all Douglas



Cook's eccentricities, we should not forget the legacy he has left New Zealand in the Eastwoodhill Arboretum. If you haven't been there make a time one autumn to do so! Interesting to see the progress being made on the Guthrie Smith Arboretum at Tutira on the way past, with plantings now visible from the road and new fences going in.

March saw the removal of the Dell Pine. This tree was reputed to be the second largest *Pinus radiata* in the country. It had undergone substantial decline since even my start at the garden, to the extent that while the main structure of the tree would remain intact, the peripheral branches were posing an increasingly unacceptable hazard to users of the Dell. In a very well coordinated operation the contractor removed and disposed of the tree with minimal damage to the Dell and surrounding vegetation. To give you an indication of the size of the tree, nearly 80 tonnes of timber were removed and the bottom 4.0m section of the trunk was nearly 2.0m in diameter and weighed 13 tonnes. We

have retained and stored cones from the tree for the genetic material they hold in the event that we need to make reference in the future.

Brendan Moore has been appointed as the gardener in the main gardens, taking over the position vacated by Jasmine's appointment as Curator of Shrubs and Camellias. Brendan comes to us at the end of his apprenticeship. Charmaine Scott, your editor, has joined us as our Visitor Services Officer. Charmaine has gripped the role with both hands and is making great progress, especially with Spring Festival.

While I met with the Guides at their debrief, I want to record my thanks for the work they have done over the past peak season. It was hot, there were a lot of visitors and I'm afraid not too much shelter, so it was not an easy season for them. Along with the Friends we are looking at solutions for shade and shelter for the next season.

David Sole

Editorial

Friends will have realised by now that their editor doesn't editorialise – but it seems that now it's time to come out of the closet. After seven years of relative anonymity an introduction has been rather forced on me. You see, I am the Garden's new Visitor Services Officer. My appointment came as a bit of a shock on several fronts – after a decade of haphazardly applying for part-time jobs, I finally had success, scoring a full-time one. Now I have to get up early every weekday morning and go through the day in a highly-structured manner – the sort of voluntary work I've been doing from home is quite a different "discipline". And our cats are none too impressed with the new regime – there's no one home to entertain them to the degree they previously enjoyed and expect.

Of course, my new working environment is superb - about as glorious visually as you could hope for but the audio isn't bad, either, given it's the perfect place for birds to hang out. I can hear a grey warbler from my office and we even have visiting kaka. Icing on the cake, the cake part being an

intense feeling of 'team' (and yes, there seems to be a regular supply of the other sort of cake too) – we're all there to help each other and on top of that, how could you not enjoy hanging out with a bunch of people who like to talk plants?

And the reason I've been stirred to editorialise is to do with my new colleagues. I have been made to feel very, very welcome, by all staff, without exception, from the gardeners (who, as they do with the public, show no impatience with my questions) to my room mates in the annex, the boss and other Treehouse denizens and all the other WCC departments with whom we interact. As happens in a new job, the first few weeks have caused many anxious moments over the enormity of the task and the steepness of the learning curve. Despite that, I have gone home most days with a smile on my face. As Friends, you should know that this team whose work you champion are as fine a bunch of people as can be found anywhere. They deserve your support.

Charmaine



Profile of a Gardener Ted Sweetman 1925 - 2008

New Zealand's 'Mr Fuchsia', Ted Sweetman, died earlier this year, just two days before the Fuchsia Society's annual show. Ted, arguably the country's most enthusiastic fuchsia buff, founded the National Fuchsia Society of NZ in 1984 and encouraged a world-wide interchange of fuchsia information and events.

The son of a nurseryman, Ted joined the family business, Palmerston North's Sweetman's Nursery, at age 15. The nursery grew great numbers of annuals and other plants for Woolworths; in the 1940s annuals – poppies, pansies, marigolds, etc – were big sellers. When Ted was 18 his father became unwell, so Ted took over the running of the nursery.

His boundless energy and enthusiasm already very apparent, Ted found time for sport too, playing hockey and table tennis, and swimming – he was a Manawatu representative hockey player and New Zealand trialist.

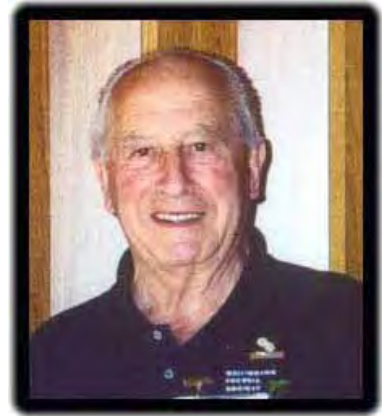
Eventually the family business was sold and Ted moved to Hawkes Bay, where he drove passenger buses from Gisborne to Bay of Plenty and Rotorua, subsequently taking on the Newman's Napier-Wellington run. Following a period of OE and more bus driving, Ted then joined Europa Oil. This job had him moving around New Zealand and, while in Dunedin, he discovered another passion – motor racing. The 1960s saw him, with his usual energy and passion, competing in sports car events and speed trials, culminating in several Pukekohe production car titles. Ted was a Jaguar man and his wife Alison reckons he owned around 28 of them over the years.

Ted didn't just limit his botanical passion to fuchsias, either. He was a valued, "wise and calm member" of the Friends committee, serving as editor for several years, until 1999, and as vice-president during this time. Ted was involved in the production of the Garden's first colour brochure. The Garden holds an extensive collection of fuchsias, including several species, many of them donated by Ted and Alison - subsequently Ted used them to demonstrate pruning techniques and timing.

In 1997 Ted's work in the fuchsia field was recognised when he was awarded an Associate of Honour, for "rendering distinguished service in horticulture", by the the Royal NZ Institute of Horticulture.

The Friends are honoured to have received a generous bequest of \$5,000 from the estate of Edward (Ted) Sweetman.

With thanks to Alison Sweetman, Peter Tjisen, Mike Oates, Monica Dearden, Phil Tomlinson and Jason Temel. Photo of Ted courtesy National Fuchsia Society of NZ, F. procumbens photo by Ted Sweetman, other photos by Charmaine Scott.



Fuchsia Ted Sweetman



F. Alison Sweetman



Red Glory



NZ native F. procumbens

Friends Late Summer Event

A very successful and thoroughly enjoyable event was held in April to celebrate Late Summer – and a good thing that was too, what with daylight saving ending and a few days of calm but chilling southerlies reminding us that this wonderful long summer has drawn to a close. Committee member Sue Batley invited landscape architects Mark Newdick and Hamish Moorhead along to give us their take on landscaping in the Wellington region. Their young company – the business partnership is but two years old – has nevertheless got a good number of finished projects to its name already, some rather substantial.

The Friends provided a tasty spread of nibbles and allowed time for catching up and chat – also for buying bulbs from Angela’s stash; I think several members were very pleased to have the chance.



What a stunning venue the Begonia House is – one of the rare occasions when a backdrop can’t help but insinuate itself into the foreground.



Begonia Phil



Margaret picks up some landscaping tips

As a topic, Landscape Architecture may sometimes seem a little dry but this illustrated talk most certainly wasn’t. Mark took us through a Mt. Victoria garden re-design, from neglected jungle to the finished eye-catching re-design. He talked about the whole process - consultation, preliminary ideas, design – hard (the structural elements – paths, concrete, pond, pergola, edging) and soft (plants) landscaping aspects, the installation, planting and maintenance. The end result was a very distinctive garden that fitted into the wider landscape where needed – fabulous harbour views – or screened it out – an unattractive neighbouring wall. The dominant feature of this garden is a long cantilevered, sliced, underlit concrete walkway over a shallow pond and Mark noted that this was not only a challenge to design and install but also a rather expensive part of the garden.

Hamish then showed us several other gardens they had designed in the Wellington area, showing a wide range of environments and client requirements made real. We saw good evidence that you can mix exotics with natives to great effect. The pair are very mindful of preserving vistas, borrowed views and distant panoramas – landscaping is not just about looking within the garden. Surely everyone took away a useful idea or two about plant use, although I must say I did find the clipped *Teucrium* hedge in the low-maintenance garden a bit of an oxymoron.

Sue and the team did a great job of organising a relaxed and fascinating couple of hours for us.

Profile of a Guide – Nonie Hoggard

Nonie has been a member of the Friends since it started in 1990. She has also been a guide the whole time guiding has been done. She has just retired from guiding, because, as she said, "at 80 you have to cut back!!." She tells us her story.

I have always loved the Wellington Botanic Garden. Many many years ago our parents used to take us for picnics in the Rose Gardens, now the Sound Shell lawn. Going to town on the Karori bus meant looking out on the Garden, and marvelling at its size, and knowing we belonged there.

So I was delighted, 17 years ago, to be asked, by Helen Macandrew, to train to be a volunteer guide in the Garden. Training consisted of walks round the various areas, often led by Winsome Shepherd or Donal Duthie, and a growing awareness of how little we knew. From school and University I was well-versed in the natives, but to be told there were 140 introduced conifers, (and that was only the conifers) was daunting indeed. I won't tell how small a fraction of that list I mastered, but it was great learning all the time.

For testing we were each allotted a path or area, and led the others around, on different dates. I particularly remember Beverley Price, standing by the old duck-pond, and teaching us the cedars. She lifted her arms for *Cedrus alpinus* (ascending branches). She held them level for *Cedrus libanus* (horizontal branches) and down, but away from the body for *Cedrus deodora* (descending branches). If you ignore the aberrant branches and use a little imagination, this holds true for the three fine cedars in that area.

In those early years we used to do regular walks, one afternoon a week, starting outside the Begonia House. I particularly remember an English woman who gave me such good advice (as though I had any power!) - it was, "never replace your regular gardeners with contract labour. We have done this in London. These contractors did not plant the trees and nurture them and know their history and love them." How right she was, and how lucky we are in the gardeners today.

I have absolutely loved guiding in the Garden, and resign now most sadly and reluctantly. I have met fascinating people, especially from the tourist ships, but also many New Zealanders of all sorts.

I particularly remember a group of farmers, very knowledgeable and familiar with many of the trees. "Yes," they said, "we will plant anything, as long as the Government doesn't tell us to." I remember another man, off a tourist ship, who said about a shrub I couldn't name, "Now you find out before I come again." I certainly did.

My favourite trees are:-

- 1 The puriri on Ludlum way. It has space to spread out to its full glory, as a puriri should.
- 2 Those three cedars
- 3 The Sitka spruce, scruffy and all as it is, because the Americans love to be told it is the tallest tree in the Garden, just topping the Norfolk pine beside it.
- 4 *Pinus pinaster*, the maritime pine, with its wonderful red bark, and its paisley-shaped cones. (many a time I've scrambled down to retrieve a cone or two to show.)
- 5 The kohekohe, in flower and fruit.
- 6 The devil's paw, *Chiranthodendron*, up near the cable car, great for starting off the tourists to the wonders we have to offer.
- 7 Not a tree, but I do love the *Tecomanthe*, climbing up the lift, onto the balcony and round the seats. What a climber!
- 8 Of course, the wonderful cork oaks, those special trees!

I would like to offer enormous thanks to the three leaders of the guides over the years, Helen Macandrew, who started us off, Rob Bos, who carried valiantly on, and now Jenny Hickman, who keeps introducing new walks, new ideas, new guides, and is bubbling with enthusiasm. Thank you too to all the other guides, such good companions, such weatherers of storms.

May the Botanic Garden continue to be a jewel in Wellington's crown, and, to quote the plaque on the entrance gates, from Erasmus, a place "to rejoice the eye, to refresh the nose, and to renew the spirit."



A Piece of Hector

James Hector and John Buchanan are very much part of the story of the Wellington Botanic Garden. Both gentlemen played a significant role in the early scientific study of this country, and left their names on many plants and other organisms.

While not a plant of this Garden, *Prasophyllum hectori* never the less is linked to them, and makes an interesting story.

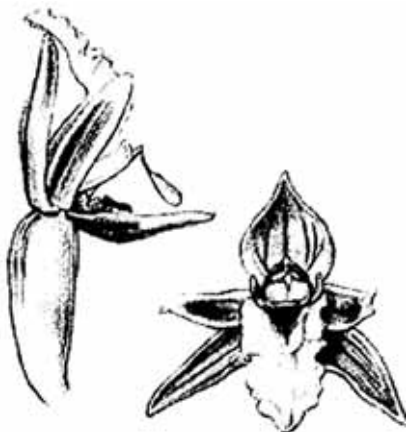


John Buchanan, the first botanist to work in the Garden, at a meeting of the NZ Institute in Wellington in 1886 named a plant that he took to be a *Gastrodia*. He called it after his friend James Hector, giving it the name *Gastrodia hectori*, one of some 7 species named in his honour. Buchanan wrote that the plant had been collected near Picton, and had been seen on the Conway River. In his original 1886 article he provided the illustration of the folded plant.

Some years later the botanist Thomas Cheeseman was subsequently sent plants from the Maungatapere swamp near Whangarei, and from Great Barrier Island, and found it himself at the Ngaere swamp in Taranaki. He identified these plants with the Australian *Prasophyllum patens* in 1906, and noted that *Gastrodia hectori* was in fact a *Prasophyllum*, "probably *P. patens* R.Br." The NZ plant that was later recognised as different from *P. patens*. Known for quite some years as *P. aff. patens*, it was eventually recognised that the plant corresponded to that described by John Buchanan in 1886 and was reinstated as *Prasophyllum hectori* in 2005, placing it in its correct genus.

Prasophyllum hectori is a wetland plant, growing in swamps or even flowing water; and reaches up to a metre tall. Flowers are flushed red/purple although as with many orchids, a form lack-ing the red pigment occurs in some regions. The flowers are strongly perfumed, and insects swarm around it in late summer evenings. Originally found in Marlborough, it has not been found there for many years, and now occurs in the central North Island. It is acutely threatened, and nationally vulnerable, barely surviving in a number of scattered wetlands.

Hector's name is commemorated in many ways, and with his friend and co-worker John Buchanan, it is fascinating to recognise the contribution of these two individuals, in addition to their significant work in our Garden.



Phil Tomlinson

Annual Subscription Renewal 2008 - 2009

Membership to Friends of the Wellington Botanic Garden Inc is due 1 July 2008.

Your subscription helps with the cost of creating and sending the newsletter, assists with raising funds for projects throughout the gardens and raising the profile of the gardens to the wider public.

Student	\$15.00 per annum
Individual	\$20.00 per annum for a single person
Family	\$25.00 per annum for one or two adults and their dependent children to be active members of the Society
Schools & Community Groups:	\$25.00

And, of course, donations are always welcome for Garden projects.

Glow-worms

The first of the season's Glow-worm walks was held in early May. So, unfortunately, was one of the season's southerly storms, producing delightful (not!) cold, wet conditions. Guide and glow-worm head-honcho Graeme Lyon reports that the second guide was told to stay home and the first prospective clients (only one of whom actually got out of the car) were happy to be

persuaded to come back next month. Not so the next lot, a couple with an enthusiastic 4-year old, so Graeme proceeded with the tour. He says the talk was held in shelter and light, in the toilet foyer, and that umbrellas worked well for the viewing part. The glow-worms, in quite adequate numbers, performed well despite the weather

One side of the annex where your editor spends her days has been planted in purple flowering *Plectranthus* and *Salvia*. I imagine the adjacent monster *Wisteria* will be purple too when it flowers. Delicious.



Coming Events

Sunday 18 May, 11am

Time and Space - View sculptures and sundials, with the opportunity for contemplation and participation. Meet at the fountain in the Rose Garden. Moderate walk, with some uphill sections (60-90 minutes).

Monday 26 May 10am

Gondwanaland Plants - Looking at the New Zealand native plants which evolved from the Gondwanaland flora. Meet at the Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street. Easy walk (60-90 minutes).

Friday 6 June 730pm

Glow-worm tour. Join us on a gentle one hour walk to see the glow-worms in the Botanic Garden. Wear suitable footwear and bring a torch. Meet at the Founders' Gate. Bookings not required. Adults \$5.00, primary school children free.

Sunday 15 June 11am

Our Native Forest - A guided tour through the areas of native forest in the Botanic Garden. Meet at the Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street. Moderate walk (90 minutes).

Monday 23 June 10am

History of the Botanic Garden - An historical walk with interesting stories from the early days of Wellington and the Botanic Garden. Meet at the Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street. Easy walk. (90 minutes)

Friday 4 July 7.30pm

Glow-worm tour. Details as for 6 June.

Sunday 20 July 11am

Our Winter Garden - A look at the Victorian influence on glasshouses, with a tour of the Begonia House. Meet in the BH foyer. Little walking involved (1hr)

Monday 28 July 10am

Plants and Poetry - In 2004 Dinah Hawken was Poet in Residence at Wellington Botanic Garden and Otari-Wilton's Bush. On this short winter walk we visit the special plants that have a poem written about them, and read their poems. Meet on the upper side of the Playground. Easy-moderate walk. (60 minutes).

Friday 1 August 7.30pm

Glow-worm tour. Details as for 6 June.

Sunday 17 August 11am

Ships and Trees - A fascinating story of man travelling across water and some of the trees that made this possible. Meet at the Duck Pond. Easy walk. (90 minutes).

Monday 25 August 10am

Bunya, Birch, Beverages and Bark

Ten intriguing tree tales. Meet at the Cable Car entrance. Moderate to energetic walk. (90 minutes).

Friday 5 September 7.30pm

Glow-worm tour. Details as for 6 June.

For enquiries please phone the Treehouse Visitors' Centre 04 499 1400

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