

## Newsletter

March 2008

Featuring: *A Collector's Tale*  
*Bulbs For Sale*  
*Volunteers Recognised*

### Late Summer Members' Event

Thursday 10 April 6 - 8pm  
Begonia House, Botanic Garden

*Come and enjoy refreshments and convivial company,  
and an opportunity to hear two Wellington landscape  
architects -*

*Hamish Moorhead and Mark Newdick  
- talk about landscaping in the Wellington region.*

*The December 2007 "NZ Home and Garden" describes  
their specialist consultancy as one "that balances  
aesthetics with ecology and design innovation". The  
article notes "Their gardens integrate bold  
landscaping features - polished concrete paths and  
platforms, clever lighting, and strong sculptural  
elements - with a surprisingly diverse palette of  
intriguing natives and exotic foliage plants that  
don't mind living rough".*

*This will be an informative and interesting  
presentation - not to be missed.  
All members and their families and friends are  
invited.*

## President's Patch

The very special place of our Botanic Garden, and the roles it serves for the Wellington community, has again been strongly reinforced throughout the summer.

The Herbarium Amoris exhibition and the associated Solander Trail attracted many citizens and visitors; enthusiastic crowds attended the Summer City events; and thousands of visitors chose to spend part of their limited time in our city enjoying the delights of the Garden. Garden staff made their usual excellent contributions in maintaining high standards of presentation of all the collections, and cleaning up after the crowds.

Our Guides and Hosts provided a warm welcome and information to the many tourists - from cruise ships, tour buses and independent travellers - who enter the Garden through the Cable Car Precinct. I know from my own experience how much that service is appreciated by our visitors. The need for appropriate shelter facilities for our members who offer that service - in hot weather

and rainy days alike - is never more apparent, and will be discussed further with Garden management. The Guides will be offering several fascinating and informative walks in March. Participation by members and their friends and families is always welcome.

Many members have told me how much they enjoyed the event at the Linnaeus exhibition, in particular the talk by Professor Phil Garnock-Jones. We have expressed our appreciation to him. Another members' event is planned for April - details are on the front page.

Signage issues continue to be a major focus for your committee. The new map boards at all the main entrances are a significant improvement. I am pleased to report that I believe we will see further visible progress over the next few months on the Downhill Path and in the Rose Garden, and then, I hope, in the bush areas.

*Ted Woodfield*

## Volunteers Day Award

Late last year two of the Guides from the Friends were recognised by the Wellington City Council during a reception celebrating International Volunteer Day. The convenor of the Guides Jenny Hickman and Phil Tomlinson were nominated by the Botanic Garden and each received a certificate of appreciation.



Both Jenny and Phil, in accepting this Certificate, regarded it as recognition of the work *all* the Guides contribute to the Garden. During the year many hours of work are completed taking tours and hosting visitors, especially cruise ship visitors, to our home, something that is certainly appreciated by most who visit our city. The work is not just by one or two individuals, but the whole team, and all can accept this as an appreciation for their work.



## Botanic Bulletin

What a fabulous sunny and warm summer for Wellington. It has just been fantastic for all of our out-of-town visitors, alas not so good for some of the plants that are hunting out water.

The photographic exhibition Herbarium Amoris was a huge focus for the Garden this summer and drew approximately 11,000 people in. Some of the resulting comments were positively enlightening and personally, I think the show must go on!!! The world class photographs were a wonderful drawcard for the Treehouse Visitor Centre and were so perfectly aligned to our Botanic Garden setting that we should be looking at hosting more exhibitions over the next few summer holidays. Now where is this new Visitor Services person that we require to drive such a huge proposal?

The Treehouse Visitor Centre is about to get some new overdue signage. The Shell Classroom will no longer be the place people ask for hoping and expecting to see a shell collection. Signage is such an important thing to get right, as we found out with the new West Entrance map board being orientated differently this time from the last and having being sited where it is, its map now reads upside down...

With a few removals of pines and macrocarpas lately the landscape is being transformed in some places and planning for future plantings and what the landscape might look like in years to come has been one focus over the past three-four months. Discussions and debates amongst the Garden staff over what might look good and what will grow best where have been typed up in a first draft. Hopefully, when this draft is ready for circulation, it will encourage more discussion, resulting in a final document. This will be an easily followed 'working' document which provides a structured approach to the Garden's future tree framework planting.



The tuberous begonia season has been especially fruitful to date. The scented begonias bred at the Nursery last year and sown and grown on this year are truly delicious and mighty aromatic. With our regular suppliers and past breeders and growers falling by the wayside, triggered last year by the last one taking retirement from breeding at age 78, we took the initiative to breed our own supply. Two seasons ago we had success with breeding some of our own red begonias. Our first attempt at breeding, cross-pollinating two of our prize blooms, coincidentally happened to fall on civil union day.

David is due back to the Garden on the 3rd of March, thankfully, and I am looking forward to slipping back into my role within Plant Collections. Eight months have passed by quickly and there is so much to do with the management of the gardens and with the plant collections themselves. Be prepared for the coming changes!!!

*Leanne Killalea  
Acting Manager*

## Members' Evening: Herbarium Amoris



More than 50 FOBG members, families and friends attended a members' evening on Thursday 31 January. The event was held in association with the exhibition of the luscious and provocative photographs by Edvard Koinberg, the Swedish photographer. Koinberg's photos of plants and flowers brilliantly illustrate the life and achievements of Carl Linnaeus, the renowned Swedish botanist.



Linnaeus was born in 1707 and the exhibition in the Treehouse was a tribute to this great scientist on his 300th anniversary. It was brought to New Zealand by the Swedish Institute and the Swedish Embassy. Linnaeus's most valuable contribution to botany was the method he developed for identifying and recording flora and fauna. The binomial nomenclature he introduced, giving all plants and animals two names – a generic (family) name and a name for the species - is still in use today.

Koinberg's photo exhibition, entitled Herbarium Amoris (the garden of love) emphasises another important insight of Linnaeus, that is the sexuality of plants.



At our gathering on 31 January, members of the FOBG and guests were enlightened by Professor Phil Garnock-Jones, Professor of Plant Science at Victoria University of Wellington, who spoke to us about the sex life of plants, as an introduction to the work of Linnaeus and as illustrated by Koinberg's photos. The talk took place in the Treehouse, in the exhibition room, with the photos surrounding us. Professor Garnock-Jones dealt with the subject with wit and insight and the ensuing question and discussion period was lively and entertaining.

*Ted Woodfield*

*Phil Tomlinson has taken some fantastic photos of people reflected in the exhibition photos – a visit to [www. friendswbg.org.nz](http://www.friendswbg.org.nz) is, as always, well worthwhile - ED*

## BULBS 2008

*Don't delay, get your spring bulbs here. The annual bulb sale is a fundraiser for the Friends and a win-win all round, because you have the chance to buy special and fabulous top-quality bulbs at rock-bottom prices. Here's this year's List of Temptation:*

**Tulips:** 5 bulbs for \$5.00

**Parade** - clear red and its sport **Golden Parade** – strong yellow

Both are eye-catching clear colours.

**Ivory Floridale** – white/cream would contrast well with the Parades. As an alternative it would be attractive combined with the pink tulips

**Pink Impression** – big and bold candyfloss pink.

**Fancy Frills** – delicate white flamed pink.

**Purple Prince** – mid purple colour comparatively low growing and would combine beautifully in a pot with the also low-growing

**Princess Irene** – orange flamed violet, the Princess has been in the top 10 garden tulips (Britain) for over 40 years.

**Donna Bella** – rich cream with carmine patch. Short growth, ideal for pots.

**Spring Green** – white flamed green.

**Species Crocus:** early to flower and they produce many flowers per bulb 10 bulbs for \$5.00

**Cream Beauty** – rich cream

**Blue Pearl** – soft pearly blue

**Purity** – pure white

**Daffodils from Nelson:**

**Pink cup, red cup, yellow on yellow and white on white.**

5 for \$6.00, 10 for \$10.00, 15 for \$14.25, 20 for \$18.00

The growers have been in business for 60 years and were recommended by a very knowledgeable member of the Wellington Botanic Garden staff.

**From the Kapiti Coast,** special bulbs for people who like something a bit different:

**Freesia Burtonii** NZ-raised, fragrant white flowers with yellow markings, produced abundantly. \$2.00 bag of ten

**Ixia** – Pink, yellow or white. Starry flowers carried on spikes \$3.00 bag of ten

**Romulea bulbocodium** – white with some pink shiny starlike flowers – nice in a pot, \$5.00 for ten.

**Babiana** – Baboon Flower: Purple-blue flowers on 20cm stems. Flower late spring and like dry, sunny places. \$3.00 for 10

And a very few **Tritonia crocata** (orange) and

**Ornithogalum umbellatum** (white with green stripe)



Got you going?

email Angela: [fergiehill@clear.net.nz](mailto:fergiehill@clear.net.nz) and she will send you an order form or phone 479 5580 if you'd like a snail-mail copy.



## The Postcard Collector

**Donal Duthie** owns over two hundred postcards featuring scenes and events from our Botanic Garden. Last year he generously lent them to the Friends for display and, subsequently, reproduction in your newsletter. He tells us how this collection came about.

About 1981 the Parks Department of the Wellington City Council were investigating a publication to mark one hundred years of City Council administration in the Garden. Parks were then in the process of contracting Winsome Shepherd to write a book (and later engaged Walter Cook as co-author).

As preparation, a young lady was engaged to do some initial investigation into the history. This lady phoned the Botanic Gardens, as they were called at the time, and asked what photos or documents were held at the Gardens. I was able to say that, unfortunately, we held nothing. Just as she was about to hang up I remembered that we had a couple of old postcards pinned to the back of the potting shed door. She came and had a look and was quite interested. I then told her I had seen similar ones in shoeboxes on the counters of stamp dealers. I told her that if I saw more I would pass them on.

Nearly a month later I took about ten cards into her office. The lady was well-pleased and paid me the same sum that I had paid for them. Two months later I returned with more, but she was not quite so enthusiastic this time. Next time I had no doubt the cards would not be wanted and so I said, "You don't really want these, do you?" With that, I then bought all the cards back and so my collection started.



1928 scene

At first I haunted stamp dealers, second-hand shops and antique dealers, perusing through shoe boxes of cards. At that time most cards could be bought for 50c or \$1. \$2 was considered to be expensive and I refused to pay anything over \$5.

Someone told me about the New Zealand Postcard Society and I joined up. By attending postcard fairs and annual conventions of the Society, I found a much larger motherlode of cards to investigate.



Summer House 1915

At first my collection grew rapidly, then the input slowed to the point where I thought I must have just about all the cards on the Wellington Botanical Gardens. I think I had about 90 cards at this stage.



Lady Norwood Rose Gardens, Wellington, N.Z.

Through the Society I met many fellow collectors and gradually it became known that my field was the Wellington Botanic Garden (or Wellington Botanical Gardens, as all the cards said). More cards came in from other collectors and then I noticed other people buying cards on the internet. I timidly ventured into this field and could see that there was a huge potential to expand. These days I readily peruse the internet and make bids on cards.

All the while, prices have been slowly but steadily rising. Several times I have paid more than \$30 and for a few, I have paid over \$50. One particular card, held by a friend of mine, was posted at the Boys' Institute Fete in 1910. It has

the postal cachet “Posted from Wellington Botanical Gardens. 12th March 1910”. This card is probably the only survivor of that day and I know it changed hands for over \$600. This card probably falls into the category of ‘Postal History’ rather than in a pictorial collection of Botanic Garden cards. However, it interests me and I feel fortunate to have a photographic record of it.



I still come across cards new to me. Recently, I have come across a number of cards produced privately – they were not produced commercially and sold through the usual venues. These cards have unique character.

Many of the cards have wonderful messages on the back and it makes you realise that they were an important means of communication in the days when few had a telephone. People used them much the way we use email today. It is not unusual to find messages such as, “Belle is arriving on the 4.30 train on Wednesday. Come round for tea as well” or “Having a lovely holiday in Wellington. Dreadful trip from Lyttelton. Johnny was awfully sick.”

Today I have about 250 cards but I still keep looking. I don’t think I will ever sit back and think, “I have them all.”

Donal Duthie

As Donal has noted, many of the cards have wonderful messages on the back. Surprisingly, the general tone is much the same as it might be today, with many comments along the lines of “Sorry I haven’t written sooner”; the grammar and penmanship is not always the best (and don’t we colour the past – you tend to forget that despite the previous major emphasis on “writing” in schools, it didn’t always have the desired effect); and we discover that junk mail has been around for, well, possibly centuries.

Some of my favourites from the other side of Donal’s collection:

*Sorry I won’t be able to write this week. Taddy (brother of the writer, we think – Ed) is home on extended leave and we have every night out. So you know what that means.*

*From bouquet: Dearest, I wish you could see this garden we have up here. It beats any of ours and the view of the harbour is lovely.*

*To brickbat: The gardens are a bit crude, but I daresay will be worth seeing in 100 years time.*

*Why don’t you call at the Post Office for letters? If you don’t you will never get them. I sent one last Friday and Sara tells me you never got it.*

Begs the question of just how the addressee would get this message.

One “trade” Christmas card sender had the temerity to suggest *This is to remind you that my representative will be calling on you about 8 March 1915. Your favours are always appreciated and I trust you will start the New Year well by giving him a good order.*

And the most intriguing: *Hope you are better. You must not mind me not writing. There are good reasons.*



Postcards need stamps and, yes, there is even a Botanic Garden stamp, the design of which is based on – a postcard.

Charmaine



## Man (and Woman) In The Trees



*The nursery at New Plymouth's Cedar Lodge started by accident, a hobby that got out of control. Noeline and David Sampson decided to specialize in conifers, to keep small, so they could handle it easily. Not so; they had taken on the world's largest family of plants. Every continent of the world has its own native conifers, from Siberia to the tropics. Because of our moderate climate, particularly in North Taranaki, we are able to grow a far greater range of conifers than is generally possible in most other parts of the world. David and Noeline told the Friends their story as part of the Pinetum event held in July 2007.*

Our native conifers are generally considered too slow-growing to be a commercial proposition for wood production, based on the perception that where we find them growing in nature is where they most like to grow. However that is not always the case, because, if given the chance, growing in a more favourable site, they will grow at a greater rate. Work is being done at the moment experimenting with favourable sites and using nurse trees to encourage a better form for timber production and the potential future price for quality timber could more than compensate for the longer crop rotation.

The four native conifers being experimented with at the moment are kauri, rimu, totara and kahikatea. I don't expect vast areas being planted but the potential I am sure is there. While on the subject of timber production, I am very confident in the future of the timber industry generally. The world supply of timber is being exhausted and at the same time world demand is going up and nothing is going to stop it. We have just seen what has happened with the milk price - supply and demand again.

I have spent many years learning the botanical names of our native conifers, only to find that the botanists have recently changed many of them. Not only that, but they have made some almost unpronounceable. Many of the genus *Dacrydium* are changed to *Halocarpus*, *Lepidothamnus* and *Manoao*. Two of the genus *Podocarpus* are now *Prumnopitys*. Rather confusing.

Talking of botanical names, I would like to encourage the use of botanical names rather than common names. The use of common names can be very confusing, particularly for a nurseryman, as the same common name can be used for several different trees. Whereas botanical names are consistent wherever in the world and, more importantly, they actually give the full family history, so to speak, by using the genus, species, variety and cultivar names. At first it looks very confusing, hence the reluctance for many people to try, but once you start it becomes much easier and most importantly gives a much better understanding of the trees. Unfortunately, our native trees suffer most from this as, not only do they have a European common name, but they also have a Maori name. Hence three names for the same tree. I acknowledge the importance of the Maori name, but do we need three?

Unfortunately, over the latter years we have found a substantial increase in the incidence of the disease commonly called Cypress Canker. This disease affects mainly the genus *Cupressus*, with *macrocarpa* and the popular Leyland Cypress being the worst affected. The species *C. lawsoniana* is also badly affected. The disease is identified by die-back starting from the tips of the foliage. It only affects part of the tree, perhaps one branch first, before eventually spreading to affect most of the tree over a period of a few years. There is no practicable treatment for it and the best means to avoid it is to plant resistant trees. We at Cedar Lodge are going out of producing the worst affected species. Cypress Canker is more prevalent further north, but I

suggest that it is present in Wellington and will only get worse in time. Being aware could be helpful.

Conifers generally require a well-drained soil. Where this is hard to find, an easy way is to build the ground level up with a thick layer of mulch to provide a free draining root run. Don't be too liberal with watering during the summer. When the soil temperatures are high in the summer and you apply water you can be creating an ideal situation for soil pathogens like *Phytophthora* to multiply quickly. Some conifers are susceptible to *Phytophthora*, particularly the species *C.lawsoniana* and its cultivars and the genus *Taxus* (yew). We recommend autumn planting, as this allows the plant to become established before the onset of summer stress.

Political correctness! It concerns me when I hear of some local bodies and groups who insist that all new plantings in their public gardens, etc. be exclusively New Zealand natives, some to the extent that all exotic trees should be removed. I remind these people to what New Zealand owes its economy. Yes, all exotic plants and animals — timber trees, fruit trees and vines, grain crops, grasses, cattle, sheep, pigs, plus others. It is noticeable that the only significant income that New Zealand earns from its indigenous self is tourism. I certainly don't disagree with native plantings, but I acknowledge the great importance that exotics have played, and will continue to play, in the furtherance of the New Zealand we know. There is a real place for both.

In latter years it has become all but impossible to import new conifer material, due to our ever

more restrictive importation laws. The gardening public is always looking for new plant material and we at Cedar Lodge have, over the last few years, introduced quite a few new conifer cultivars that we have developed ourselves. Of particular note are some real miniature *Chamaecyparis obtusa* varieties: 'Takaka', 'Chileab', 'Marble Mountain', 'Lenny's Star' and 'Hannah' (a little bigger). Our real star is *Taxodium distichum* 'Cascade Falls', which has patents covering most of the world and is being grown under licence and starting to sell in large numbers overseas. Another development of ours is a shelter-timber tree, *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Egmont'. This is a selected clone that is proving very popular and demand is far exceeding our capacity to supply. It is very disease-free and is quickly replacing the likes of canker-prone *Cupressocyparis leylandii*.

Our interest in trees led us into growing Christmas trees, starting twenty six years ago. It has developed into a very precise management programme, producing precisely-shaped trees for the cut-off market, approximately 4,000 a year. Eighteen years ago this led onto starting a specialty Christmas Shop. For the last nine years it has been sited at the nursery displaying plantings and Christmas tree plantations. This business is developing quickly and the future is exciting.

*David and Noeline Sampson*

Cedar Lodge: [www.conifers.co.nz](http://www.conifers.co.nz)

Fabulous Christmas shop:  
[www.santaschoice.net.nz](http://www.santaschoice.net.nz)



# Coming Events

## Sunday 16 March 11am

*The Herb Garden and its History*- A Herb Awareness Week walk which includes the history of the making of our Herb Garden, and the fragrant, medicinal, culinary and domestic uses of herbs. Meet at the Rose Garden Fountain. Easy walk (60 minutes).

## Thursday 27 March 10.30am

*Jurassic Walk-Without Dinosaurs*- We shall imagine the forests of the Jurassic Era, in the safety of the present day. Meet at the Cable Car Entrance. Moderate downhill walk (90 minutes).

## Thursday 10 April 6 - 8pm

**Late Summer Members' Event** (see page 1)  
Begonia House , Botanic Garden

## Sunday 20 April 11am

*Solander's World and Plant Names*  
Introducing Carl Linnaeus, Daniel Solander, Sydney Parkinson, and why plants are named the way they are. A story focused on Captain Cook's first voyage and the source of N.Z.'s first Flora. Meet on the Treehouse verandah. Easy walk (75 minutes).

## Monday 28 April 10am

*Epiphytes, Vines and Climbers* - Looking at the specialised plants that perch, entwine, strangle and climb up trees. Meet at the bottom of the Treehouse lift. Moderate walk (75 minutes).

## Sunday 18 May, 11am

*Time and Space* - A walk to 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* - A walk that looks at the New Zealand native plants which evolved from the Gondwanaland flora. Meet at the Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street. Easy walk (60-90 minutes).

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

*Microbiota decussata*

Native of Siberia.

Fresh green in spring, chocolate brown in winter

**Courtesy: Cedar Lodge website**



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