

# The Auckland Garden

Newsletter of the Auckland Botanic Gardens and Friends

June 2022





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**Contributions to the newsletter are welcome**  
Material for the September 2022 issue should be submitted by 3 p.m. Friday 12 August 2022 to the Editor  
ross.ferguson@plantandfood.co.nz

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**Images**  
Front cover: ©  
Watercolour painting of  
Hebe 'Wiri Mist' by Lesley  
Alexander

Opposite page, clockwise  
from top left:  
*Chrysanthemum anemone*  
'Tom's Memory',  
*Leucospermum* 'Preciosa',  
*Protea* 'Clark's Red'.

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# Celebrating hebes

On the cover of this newsletter is the beautiful watercolour of Hebe 'Wiri Mist'. This is by Lesley Alexander who has been involved with the Friends Art group since late 2016 when she was invited to talk about the Botanical Art Diploma run by the Society of Botanical Artists in the United Kingdom. She had just completed the 27-month distance-learning course earning a Distinction. Now she is coordinator of the Art Group. In 2018, Lesley, along with Liz Powell and Sandra Morris brought *Botanical Art Worldwide* to the Botanic Gardens, with great success, and is looking forward to organising the next exhibition to be held in 2025. Lesley is President of the Botanical Art Society of New Zealand (BASNZ), teaches botanical art weekly at the Kumeu Art Centre

and monthly at Fernglen Native Gardens. ([www.lesleyalexanderart.com](http://www.lesleyalexanderart.com))

Hebe 'Wiri Mist' was bred by Jack Hobbs – indeed, it is probably his favourite hebe cultivar. An article by Jack describes his work on hebe breeding and inside the back cover are colour photographs of some of the other successes of his breeding programme.

As described in the subsequent article, botanically, hebes are now back in the genus *Veronica*, their original home for 150 years. From the mid-1920s, hebes were placed in a separate genus, *Hebe*, but DNA studies now indicate that they, and some related genera, should be returned to the genus *Veronica*.

## Hebe breeding

Shortly after starting at the Gardens I was allocated responsibility for developing the New Zealand Native Plant Collection. I think it was in about 1980, and only a few rudimentary plantings had taken place. Most of the site was barren apart from a few mature tōtara and lots of weeds such as gorse and sheep sorrel. Over the years this collection has undergone a

few transitions, and today we know it as the New Zealand Native Plant Identification Trail.

I was delighted with this opportunity as I was very keen on native plants, with hebes being my favourites. The collection was organised in the traditional botanical garden taxonomic manner, with plants

arranged according to genera, so there were groupings of *Coprosma*, *Phormium*, *Olearia*, *Pseudopanax*, etc. The Hebe collection was at the southern end, not far from where the Friends Building is today.

Gathering a comprehensive collection of hebes was a priority for me, and gradually I assembled a diverse collection of cultivars and species from all over the country. As much as I loved them, their susceptibility to diseases such as septoria leaf spot and downy mildew made me realise that many were not great garden subjects in Auckland's warm humid climate.

This frustration led me to start a breeding programme in 1982. We were growing large numbers of *Hebe stricta* (now *Veronica stricta*) for revegetation programmes but they were typically riddled with septoria black spot, so I raised large numbers of seedlings of this vigorous species until I found one that remained relatively free of disease. I named it 'Wiri Spears' and we grew it in large numbers for planting in Regional Parks. Ecologists today will shudder when they read this, but eco-sourcing was an unknown concept back then.

Similarly, I raised large numbers of the beautiful but disease-prone *H. speciosa* (now *V. speciosa*) until I found one that remained healthy and named this 'Wiri Jewel'.

I decided to use a common prefix when naming cultivars from our programme so they would immediately be associated with the Gardens. I toyed with using "Tui" but the registrar for Hebe cultivar names, Laurie Metcalf, declined this request as Tui had already been used in a *Leptospermum* cultivar name. I then thought of using "Wiri" which is, of course, the name of a nearby area that was waning in its common usage, and this was accepted. Also I thought "Wiri" had a nice ring to it, so applied it to all the Hebe and *Leptospermum* cultivars produced at the Gardens.

My objectives when breeding 'Wiri Spears' and 'Wiri Jewel' were focused entirely on producing healthy offspring. I gave little thought to changing their appearance as I thought hebes were lovely just as they were. However, I did notice that interesting seedling variants were appearing, and this influenced me to begin crossing selected parents to capture the best aesthetic qualities of each. This required hand pollination of flowers rather than just collecting open-pollinated seed as I had done with *H. stricta* and *H. speciosa*. The process involved removing the corolla from the seed parent flowers with tweezers which also removed the stamens, thus preventing self-pollination. Also, without the petals insects were not attracted and therefore unwanted cross pollination was avoided. Then I would transfer pollen from the pollen parent to the

stigmas of the seed parents. This is a slow process requiring much patience, not my best attribute.

I aimed to produce as many seedlings as possible, and any that developed any disease symptoms would be culled immediately. For every 100 seedlings raised often only a couple would eventually be planted out to be trialled. Of those planted out only a tiny percentage had the qualities I was looking for as garden subjects. Tens of thousands of seedlings were raised over the years to produce the 15 Wiri cultivars I named. I should note that a few cultivars were given the Wiri prefix by others who I believe had sneaked cuttings from our trial plants.

My next lesson was discovering that a good garden subject did not necessarily make a commercially viable cultivar. Many that remained healthy in gardens were disease-prone when grown in typical nursery conditions with plentiful fertilizer and irrigation systems that operated at night. The attrition rate was high, with probably only 1 in every 10,000 seedlings making it into commercial production.

Despite the challenges I did have some early success. I noted that *H. diosmifolia* (now *V. diosmifolia*) always seemed clean and healthy, and so I decided to cross a pink flowered form of this species with the striking magenta flowered *H. speciosa* 'Wiri Jewel'. The first

generation resulted in two named cultivars, 'Wiri Gem' and 'Wiri Charm'. These two F1 hybrids have both proved popular with gardeners, especially 'Wiri Charm'.

'Wiri Mist' resulted from a cross between *H. diosmifolia* and *H. albicans* (now *V. albicans*), both invariably healthy garden subjects. Although one of the first cultivars I named, it remains in my view the best. It is attractive year-round and especially stunning when smothered with white flowers in late spring.

I have always considered 'Wiri Splash' to be underrated. It forms a dense mound of green foliage tinged yellow, and reliably smothers itself with lilac flowers in early summer.

'Wiri Image' is another early hybrid that has stood the test of time. It was still under trial when a well-known nurseryman contacted me to say he had plants ready to sell from cuttings he had taken (without authorisation) and asked what its name was. I was blown away by his audacity, but luckily it proved to be a great shrub.

I observed that F1 hybrid seedlings were quite uniform in their appearance, with characteristics intermediate between their two parents (i.e., flowers and foliage roughly halfway in size and colour between those of the parents). This uniformity disappeared as hybrids appeared with increasing numbers of species in their pedigree. This

resulted in new offspring that bore little resemblance to wild species, and it broadened the opportunity to produce novel new hybrids.

In 1990 I was invited by hebe growers in Denmark to visit their growing operations. I will never forget arriving at that first nursery and seeing hundreds of thousands of hebes in 100 mm pots. More than 2 million were produced annually and distributed around Europe. It transpired these were mainly used as house plants, displayed, perhaps in a window box for a few months, then disposed of. This was quite unlike our attitude to house plants here where tired old house plants would be planted in the garden when no longer suitable for display indoors.

I was invited back to Denmark a second time in 1993 to again meet with their growers. However, when I became acting manager of the

Gardens in 1996 I no longer had time for plant breeding and the programme ended. This was a shame as I had assembled a rich portfolio of breeding material and, having also worked closely with Dr Keith Hammett on other plant breeding programmes, had accumulated extensive knowledge. In recent years I have resumed my hebe breeding programme on a relatively small scale at home. If I can produce a few more cultivars with the performance and health attributes of 'Wiri Mist' in a wider range of flower colours I will be delighted.

Jack Hobbs

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A painting of 'Wiri Mist' by Lesley Alexander is on the cover of the Newsletter, and three other hebe cultivars are illustrated inside the back cover.

Botanists now include the genus *Hebe* in an enlarged genus *Veronica*. The reasons are outlined in the article below "Why *Veronica* and not *Hebe*?"



# Why *Veronica* not *Hebe*?

Many gardeners have the unworthy suspicion that botanists enjoy changing plant names just to cause confusion. The shift of the well-known *Hebe* into *Veronica* has certainly caused confusion and some distress. Actually, most botanists would like stability in plant names but sometimes there is no option but change. Such changes in taxonomy are usually the result of increased knowledge, of a better understanding of the relationships between plants. It also has to be remembered that plant taxonomy requires judgement, that different taxonomists may differ in the importance that they place on certain morphological characteristics or in how they can keep name changes to a minimum. Until recently, morphological similarities were about all taxonomists could rely on, but now studies involving DNA sequences are encouraging taxonomic revisions.

The first formal descriptions of New Zealand hebes were published in 1786 by George Forster who accompanied his father on Cook's second voyage. He published descriptions, very brief but sufficient, of them as *Veronica elliptica* and *V. salicifolia*. *Veronica* is a genus of mainly rather lowly herbs, lowly, that is, compared to our hebes which are more like shrubs. Subsequently, over the next 150 years, many New

Zealand hebes were identified and named as belonging to the genus *Veronica*.

The genus *Hebe* had long been established (1789) but was not generally used until the treatment in 1921 of some South American species. *Hebe* was separated from *Veronica* on the basis of capsule dehiscence, the plants being trees or shrubs, the nature of their inflorescences and the restriction of the genus to the Southern Hemisphere. New Zealand botanists, such as Cockayne, soon followed. Starting from the mid-1920s, the hebes in New Zealand were shifted from *Veronica* to *Hebe*, some related genera were eventually established, and hebe became the commonly accepted popular name.

This changed with DNA studies used to look at the relationships between plants. These studies indicated that the genera *Veronica*, *Hebe*, and other related genera such as *Parahebe* were paraphyletic – in other words, all the plants with a recent common ancestor were not in the same taxon (in this case, genus). It is generally accepted that plants with a recent common ancestor should be together. There were two main possible solutions: split *Veronica* into a number of smaller genera or put *Hebe* and related



genera back into *Veronica*. Botanists often prefer to “lump” rather than “split”, so Phil Garnock-Jones, the specialist on New Zealand hebes, believes that it is better to “lump”, to put *Hebe* and related genera (including the wonderfully named *Hebejeebie*) back into *Veronica*. This seems to be the current consensus between New Zealand botanists but it will take time for the change to be effected. As hebe can still be used as the common, non-botanical name, a label such as Hebe ‘Wiri Mist’ (or hebe ‘Wiri Mist’) is acceptable.

The names *Hebe* and *Veronica* both celebrate women. Hebe in Greek mythology was the daughter of

Zeus and his sister Hera. She was cupbearer to the gods serving them with nectar and ambrosia. According to some legends, she lost this role as she could not hold her liquor. She was the Goddess of eternal youth and had the rare ability to restore youth to mortals. (I have not found why the plant was named after her.)

*Veronica* is named for St Veronica who reportedly gave Christ her veil when He was on the way to his Crucifixion so that He might wipe his face. Veronica became a common European name for the plants and was adopted by Linnaeus, possibly because another common name was “speedwell”.

Ross Ferguson

## Congratulations Jack

The Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture has awarded Jack Hobbs the RNZIH Horticultural Communicator Award, a new award for 2022. Jack is known for his confident and polished public speaking, particularly if he is speaking to his superb photographs. He also excelled in that most difficult medium, TV, when for many years he was a presenter on Maggie’s Garden Show. He speaks with apparent ease and authority, probably because he really knows

what he is talking about. He has also written extensively including, with Terry Hatch, *Bulbs for New Zealand Gardeners and Collectors*.

Jack already holds the Institute’s Plant Raisers’ Award for his breeding work with the popular Wiri series of hebe and *Leptospermum* cultivars and was elected an Associate of Honour in 1996. His hebe ‘Wiri Mist’ is on the cover of this issue of the Newsletter.

# Jack's update

Summer and autumn have been wonderful for spending time outdoors or at the beach, but the lack of rain has been tough for plants. Despite this we have been getting positive feedback from our visitors on our beautiful gardens, a tribute to our dedicated team.

Recently we hoped to celebrate our 40th anniversary of opening to the public, but COVID-19 thwarted plans to hold a function. Although we haven't yet given up all hope we have, in the meantime, as Paul Swift outlines elsewhere in this issue, come up with alternative ways to remember the anniversary.

It was great to have our esteemed patrons Bill and Maggie Burrill attending the closing of *Sculpture in the Gardens* on Sunday 3 April. Bill presented the People's Choice Award which was accepted by Cheryl Wright on behalf of Glen Colechin for *Serenity*, the striking heron that was in the large lake.

During each exhibition we commission market research to determine its effectiveness and visitor satisfaction. The feedback also informs future improvements including growing visitation and the quality of visitor experience. As usual the vast majority (98%) of visitors were satisfied with the quality of

their visit to the Botanic Gardens, and 89% of visitors were satisfied with *Sculpture in the Gardens*, a similar satisfaction level to previous years. The market research report highlighted marketing as an area of improvement, as almost half of our visitors were not aware the exhibition was on until they arrived.

A significant change was that 95% of visitors came from the Auckland Region compared to 78% in 2019/20. This was of course largely due to COVID-19. There was also a significant increase in visitation from South Auckland, to 45% compared to 24% in 2019/20. Half of our visitors came from other regions of Auckland, similar to 2019/20.

The exhibition continues to play a significant role in increasing visitation to the Gardens, particularly repeat visitation. Numerous visitors had not visited the Gardens before, but 74% of these said that they would visit again within the next six months.

Over the past few years we have asked visitors how much they learnt from their visit so we can track the effectiveness of our engagement programme. The results are heartening with 19% of visitors to our recent exhibition considered they "Learnt A Lot" compared to 11% in 2019/20. Those who

indicted they learnt something said it was generally around the names of plants, their own gardens, and different types of plants including natives.

In summary the exhibition continues to deliver great outcomes, with the addition of Richard Mathieson's *Reservoirs* to our permanent art collection, a significant bonus.

Things have gone smoothly following the merger of the Domain/Pukekawa with the Gardens on 4 April. Currently both Wintergardens conservatories

Chrysanthemums at the Domain



are both undergoing significant restoration works including seismic strengthening. The Temperate House should reopen in June and the Tropical House later this year, hopefully in spring. The Temperate House was scheduled to reopen a few weeks ago and a magnificent crop of chrysanthemums had been produced by Tracey Finlayson and her team to mark the occasion, but sadly, owing to the delay, they could not be displayed this year.

Our responsibilities at the Domain are primarily for the horticultural services including the nursery operation that produces plants for display in the Wintergardens and amenity gardens such as bedding displays, perennial border and Fernery. It also includes maintaining these displays and gardens, but not edging garden beds or mowing lawns. Also excluded are the sports fields, cleaning and infrastructure, although the team will look after the water feature in the Wintergardens, and also the water feature inside the Tropical House.

We are getting to know the staff and learning what they do. They are a very capable team with considerable expertise, and we are pleased to support them to continue presenting this iconic destination to the best standard possible. We will run a series of profiles of Domain staff over future newsletters, beginning this issue with the site manager, Jonathan Corvisy.

Jack Hobbs

# Introducing Jonathan Corvisy

Jonathan's journey to his current role as Site Manager, Auckland Domain began as a child when he spent many happy weekends in his grandmother's country garden in Brittany, France. In his early teens he tried various jobs but found the garden was where he really loved to be. This led to work experience in a famous French landscaping nursery, Erwan Tymen, which grew lots of interesting plants. Jonathan says that "Meeting Erwan Tymen and seeing his garden creations was the trigger to make me want to become a Gardener".

Jonathan worked weekends and holidays for about ten years in the large garden of Madam Renée Couliou, widow of the renowned French painter Jean-Yves Couliou. He says this period was crucial as it is where he learned to develop his gardening skills and an eye for detail. At the same time he studied for four years towards a Diploma in Horticulture, followed by two years doing a High National Diploma in Business in Horticulture where he realized selling plants was not his passion. After completing a Bachelor of Landscape Development degree he travelled to New Zealand in November 2010. As he did not speak English he depended on Google Translate to communicate, but gradually his fluency improved.



His first employment here was a temporary contract working at MOTAT, followed by about three years as a gardener looking after street plantings in Remuera, Parnell and Newmarket.

Once his visa was approved in 2015 Jonathan successfully applied for a role as Team Leader at Auckland Domain, and he was appointed to his current role as Site Manager in 2017. He finds the Domain fascinating, with its rich cultural diversity and history. He says the story of the Domain is the story of Auckland and when you are at the Domain you do not feel like you are in a city. He



also loves the different and varied collections and feels that it makes a huge contribution to the health of visitors, especially those from nearby Auckland Hospital. He has been very moved by meeting people near the end of their lives getting so much from their visit, realizing that their last memories may be of the Domain.

With increased urban intensification he believes that our city gardens are more important than ever.

Most of all he loves working with his staff, saying the “If you are surrounded by good people, you are in the best place in the world”.

Jack Hobbs

## Introducing Tracy Dyett

Tracy Dyett has a strong background in public service so she is well at home as one of the welcoming Visitor Services Representatives who greet visitors at the Gardens reception.

Tracy has worked in Libraries since the late 90s, firstly at Auckland Council Public Library in Mangere East, then the National Library Service to Schools where she worked for 14 years, the last 4 years as Team Leader. Latterly, Tracy was Manager at Auckland Council Public Library in Pukekohe.

Tracy sees the role at the Gardens as a chance to reconnect with people face to face. Connecting with people is her “happy place”, and she is excited by the opportunity to contribute to the Gardens, especially after coming here as a visitor for many years. Outside of work, Tracy has her own garden at home

and enjoys growing vegetables, particularly chillies. She has a 4-year-old cocker spaniel who she adores, and is a huge rugby fan following the Auckland Blues and the All Blacks.



# Our magnificent maintenance men

Peter Biland, Garry Hadfield and Lester Notley are busy men. Each Wednesday they can be seen beavering away in the depot workshop drilling, sawing, sanding, painting. It really is testosterone heaven with all power tools available to these creative geniuses.

The wide variety of projects keeps their interests up and their skills honed to a razor-sharp edge.

Most recently the three wise men have been refurbishing some of the 100+ seats we have onsite, designing and manufacturing irrigation boxes for the collection team, designing and building potting stands for the nursery, and staining the new collection and directional signage.

The work is enjoyable and challenging, and we do have the

Garry Hadfield, Peter Biland and Lester Notley

odd chuckle. One gent (whom shall remain nameless) provided us all with a laugh when he proceeded to cut a sheet of plywood resting on a saw horse. Unbeknownst to our eager volunteer the height adjustment lever was loose on the circular saw. As he continued cutting the timber, the saw cut deeper and deeper right through the timber and the supporting sawhorse! The horse collapsed in a mess on the floor like its equine cousin after running the Grand National Steeplechase! If you are alarmed this incident may have injured our volunteer, there was in fact no threat to him other than a severe case of embarrassment.

We are always looking for volunteers to help out in the maintenance workshop. Please contact Paul Swift if you or a friend would like to know more.

Renton Campbell



# From the President

The eighth Sculpture in the Gardens exhibition closed on Sunday, 3 April with an event, ably managed by Kim Stretton and attended by artists, curators, patrons, supporters, Gardens staff, Friends members, members of the Organising Committee, friends and family.

The highlight of the event was the announcing by Bill Burrill of the People's Choice Award which went to Glen Colechin for his work *Serenity*, the stainless steel and copper heron standing quietly in the lower lake. That Glen's work took the award was no surprise judging by the comments from members of the public who viewed the show and by the numbers who photographed themselves and their children in front of the heron in the indoor gallery!

Thanks to all those who had a part to play in another very successful Sculpture in the Gardens. Three works from the outdoor exhibition were sold and sales from the very popular indoor gallery, curated by Cheryl Wright, totalled over \$173,000.00.

The sculpture exhibition may be over but there is still an art experience to enjoy. The Friends Art Group's current exhibition *Medicine, myth and magic* is in the Visitor Centre gallery until 3 July. Come along and

enjoy some exquisite botanical art and learn about some of the weird and wonderful ways plants have been used in medicine over the centuries.

In the March newsletter we noted the passing of former Friends President Terry Becher. Terry was President in 2005 then again in 2009. He is remembered with respect and affection by all who knew him. A memorial to celebrate Terry's life was held at the Gardens on 27 April attended by family, friends and colleagues. A seat, under the tōtara above the Rose Garden, has been dedicated to Terry's memory – a serene and peaceful setting.

The Friends continue to support research that will benefit the Gardens and the gardening public. Financial support has been granted to Tamsin Rooke-Devoy, a member of the Visitor Centre staff, for her Master's research into epiphytes in the Auckland urban area and to postgraduate student Samantha van Ryn for her research into improving invertebrate diversity in rose gardens. We look forward to the outcomes of their research and the resulting increase in horticultural knowledge.

The next event for Friends to look forward to – COVID-19 willing – is

our annual mid-winter Soup Day on Sunday 17 July – details and booking slips included in this newsletter.

You will see a reminder in this newsletter regarding membership renewals - payment details are included.

My thanks to the members of the Friends Committee and to Friends members for your work and support. These have been unusual times and some of our regular activities have been on hold – the Wiri Rambler

in particular, and with various restrictions on the opening of the library but we have managed to get most things done. We look forward to a less disrupted future.

And last, but not at all least, congratulations to Gardens Manager Jack Hobbs on his award from the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture as Horticultural Communicator for 2022. This is a new award and Jack is its first recipient!

Liz Powell

## Friends membership subscriptions

Membership subscriptions for the Friends 2022/23 financial year are now due. For those members who hold individual, partner, student or affiliate memberships a renewal form is included in this Newsletter. Members who joined within the last two months will have their subscription carried over into the new financial year.

Subscriptions can be paid either by eftpos or cash at the Visitor Centre or by direct deposit ASB 123011 0757619 00. Please put your name on the bank transfer and indicate that this is a membership renewal.

**Save the  
dates!**

We are hoping, COVID-19 willing, to visit the four gardens that were planned for last spring on Saturday 5 November. Full details of the bus trip will be in the September Newsletter.

Jack Hobbs will lead a cruise around Stewart Island from 10 - 18 October. Boating is the best way to access the islands and coves, and to enjoy the breath-taking scenery and botanical highlights. Contact Pukekohe Travel on 0800 785386 or go to [www.pukekohetravel.co.nz](http://www.pukekohetravel.co.nz)



# Latest news from the Art Group

I am delighted to see our exhibition, *The Art of Healing, Medicine, Myth and Magic*, is up and running after being postponed from last year. I really feel our exhibitions get better and better year on year. This year with the written information alongside the paintings, there is a more educational slant to it as well which I am pleased about as I feel botanical art should inform as well as look beautiful.

With 53 works from 23 artists there is a wide range of plants depicted in different styles and media including jewellery and ceramics to look at – something I feel for every taste!

If you have not already been to see it, I do encourage you to go. If you go on the weekends there will be art group members manning the desk, who will be able to answer any questions about buying any of the pieces or joining the group. We have sold some already so don't put off buying your favourite or someone else may get it before you. Also, if you feel able to help at weekends, we are needing more people to cover – so if you are undecided whether to join our group, this would be an ideal opportunity to meet other members as we always try to have two on together.

Four of our members also have work

in the Welcome Swallow Gallery in Hamilton – worth a visit if you live or are passing through the area. The exhibition, *Botanica*, runs until 24 June.

Talking of exhibitions, we now have confirmation that the next Botanical Art Worldwide exhibition will go ahead in 2025. The theme this time is heritage and useful crops which will give us lots to think about.

Our April meeting saw us delighted and inspired as member Brenda Hart gave us a talk on her journey as a fine art jeweller. After regaling us with her often very humorous stories we all feel she has at least one book in here – possibly two! However, her work does have a more solemn side – with work she brought in produced during her time working for the Ronald McDonald House Charities, reminding us that artists can have a role, highlighting social issues of the day.

Our next artist talk/demo will be at our June meeting, but we have yet to confirm who it will be – the best laid plans and all that! Why not pop in and see what we are up to.

If you would like to learn more, join us or help man our exhibition, please get in touch with me, Lesley Alexander – or 021 1617070 or email

lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com

I aim to respond in good time to any one contacting me but we are a bit distracted at the moment with the

birth of our first grandchild which, as I am sure many of you know, can be a big distraction!

Lesley Alexander

# Terry Becher

Terry Becher, a former President of the Friends (2005, 2009) and long-time member of the Executive Committee, died late last year. On Wednesday, 27 April 2022, family and friends gathered for the dedication of a memorial seat in the Gardens. His wife, Alana, and daughter, Natalie, spoke on behalf of the family, Jack Hobbs and Liz Powell on behalf of the Gardens and Friends. Terry Hatch, a friend

and colleague for many years, also spoke.

Terry Becher is remembered with affection as a quiet man, very knowledgeable and experienced yet humble, patient, hardworking, loyal and always a gentleman. The seat is at a site chosen by the family, under tōtara trees overlooking the small lake in the Rose Garden. The lovely view from the seat seems very appropriate for such a man.



# Friends Midwinter Soup Day

Beat the winter wet and chill by joining the Friends for Midwinter Soup Day, enjoy a delicious lunch and hear about Jack Hobbs' recent South Island tour.

Numbers are limited so return your booking slip early to be sure of a ticket. Friends members only, please. Any questions, phone Liz Powell, on 09 630 1259.

**When:**

Sunday,  
17 July, 2022

**Where:**

Friends Building,  
Botanic Gardens

**Cost:**

\$15  
per person

**Book by:**

Tuesday,  
5 July, 2022

To book, please complete and post the enclosed booking slip to: Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens, 102 Hill Rd, Manurewa, 2105. For easy contact, please ensure we have an email address.

Payment can be made either:

- by cash or eftpos at the Visitor Centre. Please post or leave your booking slip with the staff;
- or by direct deposit to ASB 123011 0757619 00. Please ensure your name and "Soup Day" are on the bank transfer and that the booking slip is posted.

Please note: If COVID-19 restrictions prevent attendance at indoor functions at this time, Soup Day will be cancelled and ticket money returned.

## Growing Friends report

We are happy to all be back together with our friends and our plants. Our customers seem to be still coming as well. Sales are still very good, and we are kept busy making sure we keep our stock at a good level and have a good range. We had a brilliant Sunday sale in May because Kathrina Muller liaised with garden staff and obtained a range of named banana plants and the Treecrops Association had a visit to the gardens on the day.

We continue to receive wonderful support and surplus plants from the staff at the gardens. Thank you very much.

We do not have Sunday sales in winter; our next Sunday sale will be 4 September. We will still be on site and open each Thursday morning as we tidy and build our stock ready for spring gardening time.

Bronwen Rowse

# Seasonal activities

Sometimes it seems gardening activities never stop irrespective of the season and the weather. Some of the most important gardening tasks must be carried out in winter such as planting of fruit trees and deciduous ornamentals to help them get established before the relative dry of summer. Winter is also a good time to re-evaluate your garden and plan changes, improvements and new garden beds.

Garden centres will shortly have an array of fruit and ornamental trees available. Choose trees that are a suitable size (width and height). Choosing fruit trees suitable to Auckland weather is important as some cultivars are more prone to pest and diseases than others. You can find the Auckland Botanic Gardens recommended fruit trees in our website: <https://www.aucklandbotanicgardens.co.nz/media/2076/fruit-trees-web.pdf>.

We are planting large-grade *Prunus* cultivars to replace the very popular but weedy *Prunus x campanulata* that were removed in 2021. The new cultivars will add to the floral delights to the Spring Blossom Valley and Camellia collection.

Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and kale tolerate the cold and can still be planted. They will be ready to harvest

in late spring, providing succession after the edible crops planted in autumn. In our Edible Garden, Angela has planted two themed beds in the Culinary Courtyard: a winter salad and a winter soup display. The winter soup bed displays turnips, carrots, leeks, celery, beetroot, kale, and parsley. The winter salad is planted with corn salad, parsley, coriander, cabbage, viola, *Calendula*, mizuna and garlic. Angela says "the winter salad bed aims to show you can eat salad in winter, and it is cheaper to eat seasonal edibles." The rest of the Edible Garden is planted with Florence fennel 'Milano' as well as edible flowers (*Alyssum* 'Snow Crystals', *Chrysanthemum* 'Snowland', *Bellis* daisy) and Asian greens such as Korean Red Kimchi cabbage and shungiku (*Chrysanthemum coronaria*) in the Walled Garden. The Kiwi Backyard has a mixture of brassicas and beetroot and a new celery 'Utah' that Angela is trialling.

Add compost and/or sheep pellet to garden beds before planting new roses. Planting in winter allows roses to get established before the warmer and drier months of summer.

Pruning activities we will undertake through winter begin with cleaning the harakeke (*Phormium*) by removing older outer leaves, with





*Bellis perennis*

just the central 3-5 leaves of every fan remaining. This helps promote vigorous new growths and keeps the plants healthy by providing air flow.

Rose pruning is planned for the first week of July for the modern roses. When pruning roses, we usually start with the removal of the three D's – dead, diseased, and distorted canes. You can view our video on rose pruning if you want a refresher: <https://www.aucklandbotanicgardens.co.nz/garden-advice/garden-tips/healthy-plants/pruning/>. The desired look we want after pruning a rose is an open, vase-shaped look. This allows light in the centre of the plant and helps stimulate the growth of new

buds and canes. Fruit trees such as apples, pears, feijoas and figs can also be pruned. The main purpose of pruning fruit trees is to control the size of the tree, allow light and air flow circulation, increase fruit production and remove any dead, diseased and distorted limbs. Choose a nice sunny day to prune to minimise the onset of pest and diseases.

Another big task to achieve in winter is to lift, divide and replant deciduous herbaceous perennials to get them established before new growth appears in spring. Divisions taken from the outside of the old clump are best and it pays to add compost when replanting.

Mere Brewer

# Save the blooms on Bastia

115 Mt View Road, Bastia, holds a special place in the history of Whanganui, with its globally significant botanic heritage of irises and leucadendrons. To the trained eye, it is a treasure trove of rare plants, dominated by species endemic to South Africa and Australia. Some are now threatened in their home countries.

Sandra Morris is an artist and an enthusiastic member of the Friends Art Group (she has a work in the current exhibition). Sandra now lives in Whanganui and she is part of a passionate team dedicated to purchasing the property, and developing it into a financially

sustainable, educational, and thriving public space. She is already busy painting some of the special plants.

“We will restore the dwelling, nurture the plants, and inspire connection with our natural environment, food sources, gardening, and allied skills and arts” says Sandra.

Time is short, and the team need help with publicity and funding. To support them please visit [www.115mtview.onbastia.co.nz](http://www.115mtview.onbastia.co.nz)

A more detailed account of the property, its legacy and future plans will appear in the September issue of the newsletter.

## Southern African Garden

Proteas were the first plants that captivated me. I still vividly remember when my father returned from work with a bunch of *Protea neriifolia* flowers; I was mesmerized, scarcely believing they were real.

When Sandra and I purchased our 5-acre block at Mauku in 1978 I began importing seed of various Proteaceae from nurseries in South Africa. This was not my smartest-ever gardening decision as Proteaceae have an intense

dislike of rich soils, and Patumahoe loams are certainly fertile. However, I enjoyed my brief fling with these plants, and managed to produce some attractive hybrids including *Leucadendron* ‘Amy’, which I named for our daughter, and which is still popular today.

I was delighted when it was announced in about 1980 that a Southern African collection was to be established. I was still looking after the Native Plant Collection



*Leucadendron 'Amy'*

but quickly put my hand up and was also put in charge of the new collection. Fortunately, I received astute advice from several experts such as the quietly knowledgeable Joy Amos, the legendary plantsman Hugh Redgrove, and Ralph Jordan who was an expert in Proteaceae. As I recall, a landscape architect drew up the bed layout and Joy and I decided how to arrange the different plant groups. Bulbs and succulents were mainly located near the Loop Rd, Proteaceae at the rear of the garden by the eastern boundary, and the many daisies were scattered around. Aloes were sourced from Coromandel Cacti, bulbs from Terry Hatch at Joy Plants. Brian Buchanan and I drove to the lower North Island to select proteas, leucadendrons and leucospermums from a couple of specialist growers including Jack Harré and Geoff Jewel.

The collection soon became a favourite with visitors, especially in winter when many of the aloes and Proteaceae were in flower. It also became a drawcard for enthusiasts as well as those with professional

interests including cut flower growers and commercial nurseries.

The first book I purchased on South African plants was *Proteas for Pleasure* by Sima Eliovson. It was a great thrill to have Sima visit in the late eighties with Hugh Redgrove and Joy Amos, especially when she commented so favourably on the collection.

Mike Hawthorne was collection curator from 2000 to mid-2004 and certainly put his mark on the collection. He redesigned the garden to give it more of an “African” theme by constructing termite mounds and installing the shields, spears and the African-style hut or rondavel. Mike still has fond memories of the wide array of bulbs in the collection, and also of “working with amazing people such as Terry Hatch and Martin Walker” from Coromandel Cacti.

To promote the collection Mike project-managed an Africa-themed exhibition garden at the 2003 Ellerslie Flower Show that won a Gold Award

and also took out the Supreme Award for Design Excellence.

Andrea Wright took over the collection in 2006 and has continued to present it to a very high standard. In 2007 Andrea received the Buchanan Award and used it to spend time at the renowned Kirstenbosch National Botanic Garden in Cape Town extending her knowledge of their fascinating native flora.

In 2008 we decided to undertake a major revamp of the Proteaceae section. This involved removing almost all the existing plants so that we could build up the beds with extra topsoil as the original soil was too fertile and heavy for proteas. I found a supply of free-draining low-fertility soil in a new subdivision at Matakawau on the Awhitu Peninsular, perfect for proteas and their kin. For immediate impact we relocated a

large *Aloidendron barberae* (formerly *Aloe barberae*) to near the Katote Close gate. It had been uplifted and stored when construction of the visitor centre Huakaiwaka began.

The most significant of all acquisitions was the Geoff Etherington Aloe collection of around 250 species received in 2015. Most of these were planted in the Rock Garden and African Garden. We believe we now hold the largest collection of aloes in the country.

Recently rustic-styled fencing was installed around the edge of the Loop Road to enhance the African feel of the garden, and we continue to add more acquisitions to keep the collection refreshed and appealing to our visitors. Now is a great time to enjoy the array of colourful plants as well as all the nectar-feeding birds they attract.

Jack Hobbs

## Changes and new beginnings

At the start of March 2020, the collections I looked after changed. Jack had suggested that it would be advantageous for collection curators to rotate every few years, and the field teams worked together with our team leaders to agree on a suitable process. I lost the Rock Garden, retained the African Garden, and gained the Spring Blossom Valley and Camellia Collection which I was

pleased about. These are some of the things I have learnt, found useful, challenging, and rewarding since getting new collections.

For collection curators the plant records database (Iris BG) is a great tool. I had always known the value of the database, but the recent change of collections has confirmed it. Not only is it one of the key things that



distinguishes a Botanic Garden from a park, but it also provides a starting point for researching and identifying plants. Especially if plants have lost their labels or tags, having a plant list for each bed has enabled me to figure out what some unknown plants, species and cultivars are by a process of elimination, research, and deduction. Even for familiar plants, having the current plants list has helped me to do further research and learn. I have particularly enjoyed learning about the uses of some of the plants, as well as learning about plants new to me.

Iris BG has also been useful to get some interesting statistics about the numbers of different plants I am privileged to look after. Knowing how many species and cultivars we have and understanding how rare, hard to source and unique some of them are makes me appreciate how special and significant my collections are. For instance, there are 47 different *Camellia* species and about 347 *Camellia* cultivars.

One of the somewhat daunting challenges of curating large collections has been the large numbers of plants in each genus and their seasonal requirements. For seasonal tasks such as pruning, the database has been useful for getting a list of plants (e.g., hydrangeas) and their locations. I can then endeavor to prune as many as possible within the pruning season. Sometimes the number of plants requiring pruning,

other work priorities and outside factors like the global COVID-19 pandemic with various lockdowns has meant that it is not always possible to get everything done, particularly by myself. I have realised (and accepted) that it is OK to ask for help and doing so doesn't mean I am failing. While I always strive to do my best and try to get the collections looking as good as possible, with gardens there is always an endless task list so be kind to yourself. If you can't complete everything in time, there is always another day and thankfully plants are forgiving, often surviving and thriving with or without attention.

Prioritising areas and workloads has been important owing to the large areas I look after. Priority goes to gardens requiring high presentation standards because of their location or season: entrances and main pathways are always done first, then come time-critical seasonal tasks like pruning and removing weeds before they seed. Less prominent, further away garden beds are done when I can, after these priorities.

Having supportive, helpful, and knowledgeable colleagues that I can refer to when I need to, has been hugely beneficial. Especially the past curators, Mark Fielder and Shaun Rice, but also Owen Newson with his experience at Camellia Haven Nursery, Emma Bodley for help with the database, Mere Brewer and Jack Hobbs for their long service,

area history and plant knowledge at ABG. Thanks also to other collection curators, gardeners, apprentices, staff and volunteers who have helped me with various tasks. I am grateful to the wonderful staff of ABG.

Taking on new collections has been both challenging and rewarding. It has been a delight to see, learn and work with different plants from those that I was previously used to. My collections are beautiful, interesting, significant, and important, not just from a horticultural, or educational

perspective, but also a sensory one. The variety of plants I work with; the flowers, foliage, forms, colours, smells, textures of the bark, the sound of wind and birds in the trees, and temperature changes from warm sun to cool shade in different locations provide many seasonal highlights throughout the year. Seeing the garden visitors' enjoyment makes all the hard work worth it. I'm pleased to have such a wonderful workplace.

Andrea Wright

## Naming plants for revenge

When botanists name a plant genus for a person, it is usually as a compliment, in friendship, with respect, in gratitude, or in hope of financial support or preferment. Very occasionally, it is with definite malice. A good example is Linnaeus naming a weed, with a foul-smelling exudate, *Siegesbeckia* for Johann Georg Siegesbeck. Linnaeus and Siegesbeck hated each other. Linnaeus thought that there should be a connection between a plant and the person it was named for. It has been speculated that since *Siegesbeckia* had such minute flowers and Linnaeus often paralleled plant and human sexual organs, Linnaeus' choice of name was also a slur on Siegesbeck's manhood.

Linnaeus was a good hater. Daniel Rolander was one of his students. The two fell out and Linnaeus made his feelings clear by naming for him a species of beetle *Aphanus rolandri*—"Aphanus" in Greek means "inconspicuous".

Another example of such malice is the naming of *Buchozia* after Joseph Pierre Buc'hoz by Charles-Louis L'Heritier de Brutelle. Buc'hoz (1731–1807) practised as a lawyer and then trained in medicine. He soon devoted himself to writing and publishing. He published at least 100 collections of engravings as well as monographs, dissertations, memoirs and notes, possibly 400–500 works in total. He based his writings on those of others, he copied plates

without permission, he copied himself. Allan Stevenson wrote in *The Hunt Botanical Catalogue*, "He has a maddening way of using the same plate again and again, in book after book – sometimes colored sometimes uncolored, sometimes badly colored, sometimes reversed, sometimes redrawn, sometimes with added details, sometimes with changes of nomenclature." Not surprisingly, he is the despair of bibliographers – hence the vagueness as to the total number of his publications.

His contemporaries rubbished his publications and did not accept his botanical binomials – his nomenclature was frequently unreliable. *The Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle* by Pierre Larousse (1867) summed it up [in translation]: "He compiled, compiled, compiled. It has been said maliciously of this blessed doctor, with such a fertile pen, that he wrote on all parts of natural history, without understanding anything, and by a species of phenomenon of which we know no other example, that he found the secret of publishing several hundred volumes, and of remaining unknown." G.A. Pritzel in his *Thesaurus Literaturae Botanicae* was more succinct: "Miserrimus compiler, fraude ac ignorata ...".

L'Heritier was so exasperated by the botanical confusion that Buc'hoz created that he gave his name to a plant, *Buchozia coprosmoides*, with

a foul smell, "quite appropriate for this particular purpose". Clearly malicious. Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on what you think of Buc'hoz, this name was invalid, and the plant is now known as *Serrissa japonica*. Another synonym is *S. foetida*. The specific epithet *coprosmoides* should mean dung-smelling. However, according to Wikipedia, the leaves of *S. japonica*, if pruned or bruised, produce a vomit-like smell. Whatever, undoubtedly unpleasant.

The genus *Serissa* contains only the one species, of which there are many cultivars. It is commonly known as snowrose, tree of a thousand stars, or Japanese boxthorn. It is frequently grown as a bonsai although it is reportedly then fussy as to its living conditions. *Serissa* is available from some New Zealand nurseries.

Although Buc'hoz has been criticised, many of his coloured engravings are very collectable and much sought after. The most decorative are from *Collection Précieuse et Enluminée des Fleurs ... dans les Jardins de la Chine ...* The plates are reminiscent of Chinese export paintings, the plants being accompanied by delightful rocks, birds, butterflies or other insects. They are technically interesting in that, unless carefully inspected, they do not look like engravings of the time but as if they were painted.

Ross Ferguson

# Celebrating our 40th anniversary

It has been a real pleasure being involved with planning the celebrations of our first 40 years being open to the public and learning some of our history.

The story of the Auckland Botanic Gardens began with some initial investigations for a site in 1926 and by the early 1960s a number of potential sites had been proposed. By May 1967 the Auckland Regional Authority had purchased 42 ha in Manurewa and subsequently Manukau City Council acquired the adjoining 40 ha. The Master Plan was completed by 1972 and the first sod was turned by Auckland Regional Authority Chairman, Mr Tom Pearce, on 19 February 1973.

23 February 1982 saw the formal opening to the public - complete

with TV celebrity the Botanic Man, David Bellamy. The rest, they say, is history and so in February 2022 the Garden's celebrated being open to the public for 40 years. As Jack says in the video presentation in the exhibition, "the challenge of turning a farm into a Garden" was a once in a life-time opportunity.

Seeing just how many people have contributed to the story of the Gardens has been eye opening. These people range from former staff, those who have regularly visited with family and friends, our valued volunteers, through to those whose special memories are of getting married here. The connections are significant and numerous.

Looking back through the archive of images has highlighted the valuable

Second anniversary plant sales, February 1984



role that the Friends have played in the development of the Gardens. The number of plant sales, membership drives and events organized, delivered and funded over the past 40 years is an amazing achievement for everyone involved. Seeing the current Friends of Auckland Botanical Gardens Art Group exhibition, *The Art of Healing - Medicine, Myth and Magic*, taking place in the Visitor Centre in 2022 following on from the ever-popular *Sculpture in the Gardens* event earlier this year just demonstrates how integral the relationship is between the Friends and the Botanic Gardens.

I am quite sure that some of you will remember that opening day back in 1982. We planned to hold a celebratory event earlier this year but unfortunately this was just not possible due to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are still hoping to be able to arrange a gathering later in the year when we have safely adjusted to living with COVID. We will share more information about this as the year progresses.

We did manage to start the anniversary year off with a small-scale photographic and video exhibition in the Visitor Centre. This was achieved despite operating with reduced staff and volunteers and security guards at the doors checking Vaccine Passes. The exhibition of photographs is steadily growing as we add more images, videos and

other content related to the history of the Gardens. The exhibition is scheduled to continue to grow over the next 12 months as we celebrate a variety of different themes such as Events, Audiences and of course the enormous amount of work of the Friends.

One of the most heartening aspects of having this little exhibition taking place so close to my desk in the Visitor Centre is seeing visitors sitting down to watch the videos and animated image slide shows. I have noticed that the “dwell time” is relatively high which indicates that people are really engaging with the content. This is not surprising though, as our visitors have been part of our journey over the last 40 years too, and they are no doubt reminiscing about their own personal experiences at the Gardens. My favorite comment made to me so far was by a lady who, when seeing Jack on the TV screen talking about his first day at the Gardens all those years ago, exclaimed aloud that ‘*he should be knighted for what he has done!*’

We are conscious that it won’t be that long before we are gearing up to celebrate 50 years and one of our purposes for the 40th exhibition is to gather information and memories now so that we have them in one place for that day in February 2032! We have created a little corner of the exhibition where visitors are being encouraged to share their memories



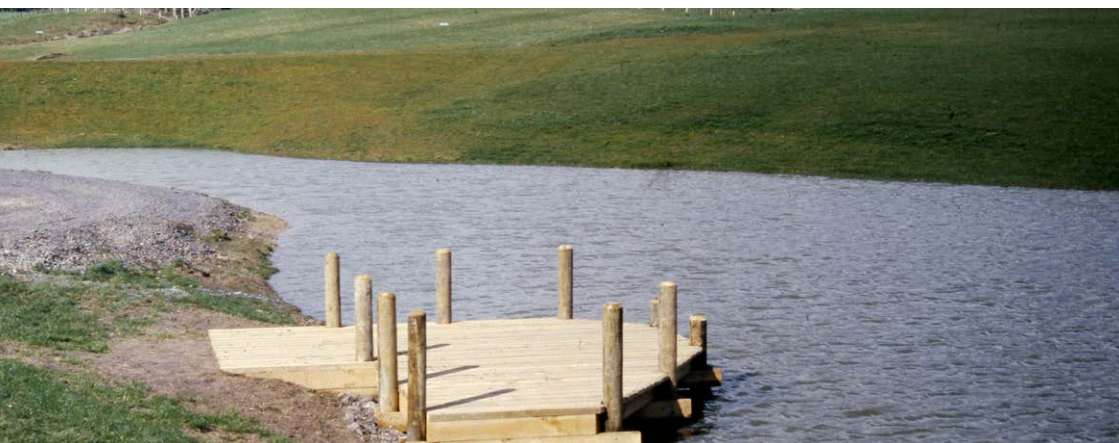
onto some paper leaves and attach them to the Tree of Memories. It is fascinating to read what people choose to share – here are just a few of my favorites so far.

- *'My children grew up in the Gardens as we lived nearby. Many happy memories and photo, especially with the spring daffodils and interacting with all the cool sculptures.'*
- *'Have been taking my weekly walks here for 20 years - love it!'*

To supplement the exhibition in the Visitor Centre we are also adding some *Then & Now* signs outside which will show some photographs of the major changes that occurred on the site. There will be some iconic images of the site under development which will be positioned in ways that will enable visitors to stand in the same spot as the photograph and see just how much the site has changed over the years.

Paul Swift  
Education and Partnership Specialist

Jetty construction in 1982, and well established in 2022







Left:  
Hebe 'Wiri Splash';  
top right:  
Hebe 'Wiri Grace';  
bottom right:  
Hebe 'Wiri Charm'!





*Protea* 'Cardinal' Photo: Jack Hobbs  
See article on page 22.



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