

The Auckland Garden

Newsletter of the Auckland Botanic Gardens and Friends

September 2024

The AGM Issue



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Images

Front cover: *Clivia* 'Coral Kiss'. Part of the magnificent Alick McLeman collection of clivias now on display in the Urban Trees area.

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Shona Pitcaithly retires from the Growing Friends, *Ixia* at Waikumete Cemetery, wild flowers at Waikumete Cemetery.

**Auckland
Botanic Gardens**
102 Hill Road,
Manurewa,
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**Contributions to the
newsletter are welcome**
Material for the December 2024
issue should be submitted by
3 p.m. Friday 1 November 2024
to the Editor
ross.ferguson@
plantandfood.co.nz



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Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens 2024 Annual General Meeting Notice

The 41st Annual General Meeting of the Friends
will be held on Saturday 28 September 2024 at 2.00 p.m.
in the Friends and Volunteers Building at the Auckland Botanic Gardens,
102 Hill Road, Manurewa.

The format and timing of the AGM is as last year: the meeting is in the afternoon followed by a talk and drinks and nibbles. There is no dinner. For catering purposes, please RSVP to friendsofabg@gmail.com if you will be attending the AGM and the social event to follow.

All Friends are encouraged to attend the AGM and to nominate candidates for election to the Executive Committee. You may wish to stand yourself.

Nomination forms are enclosed with this newsletter or may be obtained from the Administrator (email: friendsofabg@gmail.com).

Please remember that only current financial members may nominate or vote.

AGM programme

2.00 p.m.
AGM, Friends and Volunteers Building.
Please bring this issue of *The Auckland Garden* with you as it contains the agenda and reports.

3.00 p.m.
Talk by Angela Anstis on her Buchanan Award trip to the United Kingdom.

Followed by drinks and nibbles, concluding about 5.30 p.m.

Election of officers

The retiring 2023-2024 Executive Committee is as follows:

President	Viv Canham	Dianne Glenn	
Vice President	Cleone Campbell	Heather Hine	
Past President	Liz Powell	Linden Johnson	
Treasurer	Linda Christie	Ex officio	Jack Hobbs
Secretary	Barbara Harvey	(Group Manager, Botanic Gardens)	
Committee	Chris Allen	Administration	Irene Horton
	Deidre Barry		
	Ross Ferguson		

The 2023-2024 Trustees were as follows:

Chair	Viv Canham	Two co-opted representatives:
Treasurer	Linda Christie	Gary Hadfield
Secretary	Irene Horton	Simon James
Two representatives from the Friends Executive Committee:	Dianne Glenn Liz Powell	Auckland Council representatives: Cr Christine Fletcher, Auckland Council and Angela Cunningham-Marino, Manurewa Local Board

AGM agenda

1. President's introduction
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the 40th Annual General Meeting held on 28 October 2023
4. Matters arising
5. Presentation of President's Annual Report
6. Presentation of Annual Accounts
7. Motion of thanks to the Auditor
8. Appointment of Auditor
9. Presentation of Friends Birthday Gift to the Gardens
10. Friends Buchanan Award
11. Trustees Report
12. Election of Officers
13. Election of Trustees
14. Gardens Report
15. Revision of Constitution
16. General Business

NOTE: An electronic copy of the draft constitution is being sent out to all those whose email address is known. We hope to put it on the website and hard copies will be held at the desk at the visitor centre.

Motion on the new constitution:

That the draft constitution for the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens Inc. that was circulated be adopted subject to the approval of the Registrar of Incorporated Societies.
V. Canham/R. Ferguson

Existing incorporated societies such as the Friends need to reregister under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. This requires a new constitution as the new act required a lot of new information. Most of the proposed changes are to satisfy the act.

- We need to specify the registered office.
- We need to specify the contact people.
- Members must consent in writing to belong.
- Officers of the Society (President, Committee, etc) must consent in writing to be an officer.
- Officers must certify that they are not disqualified because of a long list of financial misdemeanours.

- We must maintain privacy but let members see information.
- We must have a “complaints” policy.
- At the AGM we are required to present an operational report, financial statements, conflict of interest disclosure information and (under the Charities Act) a review of governance procedures, i.e., the constitution and by-laws.

The draft constitution is based on a model from an alpine club with additional wording from the Auckland Philharmonic and the Friends of Tiritiri Matangi. Here are some of the additional changes from the existing constitution. We have tried to keep these to a minimum.

- We have allowed for the Friends to support “satellite” gardens – such as the Auckland Winter Gardens.
- We have given the Manager of the Botanic Gardens the veto – to emphasise that the Friends support the Gardens and Staff – they do not manage the Gardens and must not go against Council policy for the Gardens.
- We have removed the two layers of Trustees and Committee – we think the veto of the Manager of the Gardens is adequate.
- We have removed the Dingley Bequest from the constitution – replacing that proviso by a more general rule on bequests. The specific requirements of the Dingley Bequest will be covered in a by-law.
- If we are wound up, where the assets go must be specified. This must be in accordance with the act.

The draft constitution must be approved by a General Meeting, preferably the AGM, and the Registrar of Incorporated Societies. This draft has already been approved by the committee for submission to the AGM.

2023 AGM minutes

Minutes of the 40th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens Inc held in the Friends and Volunteers Building at the Auckland Botanic Gardens on Saturday 28 October 2023 at 2 p.m.

1. President’s welcome:

President’s Welcome: V. Canham thanked all for turning out to support the Friends at the 40th AGM. She welcomed Angela Cunningham-Marino, the local Manurewa Board member, Jack Hobbs, the Master of it all, Friends Life Members, members of the Friends Board of Trustees, members of the Executive Committee, members of the Friends and visitors.

The Annual General Meeting would be followed by an address from Jeff Jones, the Buchanan Award winner for 2022 about his time at the Chanticleer and Longwood Gardens in the USA. This would be followed by nibbles and drinks.

2. Apologies:
Christine Fletcher, Linda Christie, Barbara Myron, Shona Pitcaithly, Holly Powley, Roger and Anne Price. Moved that the apologies be accepted - V. Canham/R. Ferguson - Carried.
3. Minutes of the 2022 AGM
These were circulated with the agenda and other reports as part of the September 2023 issue of *The Auckland Garden*. Moved that the minutes as circulated be taken as read and accepted as a true and correct record - V. Canham/L. Lamason - Carried.
4. Matters arising:
None.
5. The President's Annual Report: This was also circulated in *The Auckland Garden* (September 2023: page 11) so it was taken as read. Additionally, V. Canham would like to acknowledge and thank the Executive Committee members who have kept the operation running smoothly during the year. She also asked the Committee members to stand, introduce themselves and to tell the meeting a little about their areas of responsibility.

V. Canham also thanked the Groups and their Co-ordinators for all the work they have put in over the year - Bronwen Rowse and the Growing Friends, Kate Moodie and the Wiri Rambler team, Ross Ferguson, Heather Hine, Liz Powell and the Library Group, Lesley Alexander and the Art Group. She thanked all the Friends members who volunteer in various areas of Gardens. It wouldn't be the showpiece that it is without their work.

V. Canham also thanked Jack Hobbs and the Gardens staff for providing us with such a wonderful Botanic Garden. Moved that the President's Report be accepted - V. Canham/D. Glenn - Carried.
6. Presentation of Annual Accounts: The Friends Treasurer L. Christie was unfortunately away sick. She has compiled the annual accounts, copies of which have been circulated. When the accounts have been signed off by the Auditor they will be published on the Charities website. Moved that the Annual Accounts be received - V. Canham/B. Pitcaithly - Carried.
7. Thanks to auditor: Moved that the Auditor, Anuksha Talpade of BVO, be thanked - V. Canham/C. Campbell - Carried.
8. Appointment of auditor:
Moved that Anuksha Talpade of BVO be reappointed as auditor, subject to her acceptance - V. Canham/H. Hine - Carried.
9. The Friends Buchanan Award 2023: Valued at \$12,000 it was awarded to Angela Anstis. In September she travelled to Singapore, England and Scotland. She wanted to advance her knowledge in her present area of responsibility – edible gardening. She

also has an interest in community gardening and “Garden to Table” concepts.

Her itinerary sounded wonderful - volunteering at Hortpark Zoo Singapore and Singapore Botanic Gardens and visiting Gardens by the Bay, the Singapore zoo gardens and the “Jewel at Changi” at the Singapore Airport. Her aim was to learn about sub-tropical edible plants, their varieties and their uses and community engagement. Next came London with visits to Chelsea Physic Garden, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the Wisley Flower Show. She wanted to see the types of plants grown, signage and the planning processes and enjoy the Flower Show. Next came Cornwall with visits to the Eden Project, and the Lost Gardens of Heligan with their garden-to-table concepts for cafes and restaurants. After visits to several more gardens, it was on to Scotland, and, amid other stops, the “sub-tropical” Logan Botanic Garden, warmed by the Gulf Stream. This garden hosts many New Zealand plants. Angela volunteered for a week at Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. She also visited several community gardens across Edinburgh with the team from the Royal Botanic Garden. She travelled on to Glasgow, volunteered in Manchester and then returned home.

Joanna Mason was considered equally worthy of educational support, so she was awarded a special grant of \$12,000 for the “New Naturalism” tour of the United Kingdom, Netherlands and Germany in August and September 2023. Her aim was to develop her horticultural knowledge specifically in relation to naturalised planting styles and creating more resilient gardens to withstand climate change. Through the tour that Joanna joined, she was introduced to the movers and shakers in the botanical world. She wishes to implement the knowledge she has brought back for the betterment of the Auckland Botanic Gardens. The contacts she has made through the tour will stand her in good stead in the coming years.

10. Trustees’ report

This was circulated with the agenda (*The Auckland Garden*, September 2023, page 10). Moved that the Trustees’ Report be taken as read and be accepted - V. Canham/ D. Glenn - Carried.

11. Election of Officers and Executive Committee Members

V. Canham informed the meeting that the long-serving Secretary, Laure Lamason, was retiring from the committee. She asked Ms Lamason to come forward while L. Powell spoke about her time on the committee.

L. Powell first got to know Ms Lamason in the 1990’s through work – L. Lamason as Principal of Oaklynn Special School, L. Powell then working at the Kelston Deaf Education Centre (School for the Deaf) just up the road in Kelston, West Auckland. It was a time of changes in Special Education, so they would have been at many meetings with various official groups. So, it was a big surprise some years later to find that L. Lamason had moved south, had changed from working with children to farming alpacas, had joined the Friends and was volunteering for Sculpture in the Gardens. She was persuaded to join the Friends committee and in the 11 years since had been a strong supporter of the Friends and the Gardens. Over this time, she had a number of roles on the committee – secretary (flower buyer), countersigner of payments for the

Treasurer, keeping Friends information up to date on the Gardens' website, initiating the information handbook for committee members and had been a regular volunteer and helper for many Friends and Gardens events and activities. She would be missed – both for her personal presence on the committee and her strong and good sense contribution and commitment to committee business.

L. Lamason was presented with flowers in appreciation of all her work.

12. Election of Officers and Executive Committee Members. The list of nominations was shown on the whiteboard

The list of nominations was as follows:

President	V. Canham
Past President	L. Powell
Vice-President	C. Campbell
Treasurer	L. Christie
Secretary	D. Barry
Committee	C. Allen, R. Ferguson, D. Glenn, B. Harvey, H. Hine and L. Johnson

Moved that the nominated Executive Committee members as listed be approved
- P. Canham/L. Lamason - Carried.

Manager, ABG	J. Hobbs (ex officio)
Administrator	Irene Horton

V. Canham welcomed the new Committee members, Linden Johnson and Chris Allen and hoped that they find their time on the committee to be interesting and rewarding.

13. Election for the Board of Trustees:
Members nominated were the same as at the previous financial year (listed on the white board).

Chair	V. Canham
Treasurer	L. Christie

Two representatives from the Friends Executive Committee,

L. Powell and D. Glenn

Two co-opted representatives

G. Hadfield and S. James

Auckland Council representatives,

Cr D. Newman, Auckland Council and A. Candy, Manurewa Local Board

ex officio J. Hobbs (Group Manager, Botanic Gardens)

Secretary I. Horton

Moved that the members listed be confirmed as Trustees - R. Ferguson/K. Moodie - Carried.

14. Election of Life Member: V. Canham said she was delighted to nominate Dr Ross Ferguson as a Life Member of the Friends. J. Hobbs read the citation which was to be published in the December 2023 issue of *The Auckland Garden*.

Moved that R. Ferguson be elected an Honorary Life Member of the Friends - V. Canham/L. Powell - Carried.

15. Gardens report: J. Hobbs mentioned that his report was published in *The Auckland Garden* but mentioned a few things of particular interest that had happened throughout the year:

The Friends celebrated their 40th Birthday with an enjoyable evening in the Visitors Centre.

He acknowledged the Friends for encouraging the development of staff by financing attendance at various conferences. This year the Gardens had taken responsibility for the Domain staff. It was the first time that any Domain staff had been able to attend Conferences thanks to the ongoing support of the Friends.

Sculpture in the Gardens has been deferred till November 2024, but the "Holding Ground" exhibition would be held in the Visitor Centre this year.

On Monday, 29 October the Botanic Gardens would take ownership of the Nathan property adjacent to the Botanic Gardens purchased for \$12.3M. He thanked Robyn Nathan, Councillors Christine Fletcher and Daniel Newman and the Mayor for their support. It was always Frank Nathan's desire that the land be part of the Botanic Gardens. The purchase of the land was the highlight of his time at the Botanic Gardens.

16. General business:

1. Ingrid Ennis is involved with running the Young Horticulturist Competition. She had e-mailed V. Canham seeking volunteers for an hour or so, at the Karaka Bloodstock Complex on 7 November 2023. The contestants must manage a "team" as part of the competition. Volunteers would become the team. Lunch would be provided. Those interested were invited to reply directly to Ms Ennis.

2. V. Canham said she would like to acknowledge the representative of the Manurewa Local Board, Angela Cunningham-Marino, who attends meetings whenever she can despite being a serving police officer. She, and the local board, were very supportive of the Gardens and this was appreciated, particularly during the recent purchase of the Nathan property. A. Cunningham-Marino was presented with a token of thanks.

The meeting closed at 2.35 p.m.

Jeff Jones then spoke about his trip to the United States, which the Friends had funded through the Buchanan Award.

President's report for 2023/2024

We have had two major events that have kept the Committee particularly busy this past year. The Council's decision to purchase the land at 120 Hill Rd (the Nathan Plot), aided in no small part by Councillor Christine Fletcher, came as wonderful news. It is an opportunity to implement ideas that haven't been practicable before.

Although planning is still in the very early stages (funded by the Friends up to \$50,000), it is hoped that working Maori and Pacific gardens can be established. If achieved, associated educational opportunities will abound. With the majority of trees now removed, the pleasing contour can be seen. A chainlink fence and hedge will be put along the road boundary shortly.

If you are involved with other incorporated societies you will know that constitutions have needed to be re-written following changes in legislation. Ross Ferguson and Cleone Campbell have willingly and expertly undertaken this onerous task for us, with me helping where I could.

We have taken input from other clubs' documents and changed them to suit our operation. The final document has now been passed by the Executive Committee and next it will be presented at the upcoming AGM for your consideration. We will e-mail those members for whom we have e-mail addresses. Copies will be available at the Visitors Centre for you to take away and peruse. It is also hoped to have it on our web-site too, though, at the time of writing it is not yet confirmed if this is possible.

A lot of time and thought has gone into our document and we would appreciate your reading through it to make sure that you are

happy too. It is the "bones" around which we run our organisation.

It has been great to see Friends enjoying our monthly "Friends Days Out". Events have ranged from visiting Joy Plants Nursery and Zealandia Nursery, a talk on the Food Scraps Roll Out and one on lesser known pest plants, a tour of Riverhaven Artland Sculpture Park, presentations from Kathrina Mueller, Laurence Speedy and Angela Anstis on Tree Crops Conferences, and even a pizza and movies afternoon. The "Just Between Friends" news-sheet has kept Friends members up to date with happenings in and around the Gardens.

The annual Buchanan Award of \$12,000 was won this year by Mich Newton and Barbara Wheeler jointly. In August they are attending the 8th Global Botanic Gardens Conservation International Congress held in Singapore. The theme is "People and Plants for a Sustainable Future". I am proud to say that both of our people have been invited to speak at the event. I'm looking forward to seeing the ideas that they bring back to the Gardens.

The Friends Committee has the greatest respect for the Gardens staff, so ably led by Jack Hobbs. They are unstinting in providing us with help whenever we need it and we are in awe of their knowledge. They really are a pleasure to work with. Thank you, Jack and Crew, for the wonderful ever-growing, ever-changing amenity you provide for us. You make all our efforts worthwhile.

And thank you to all our groups who work so hard to raise funds for us. The Growing Friends lost their coordinator, our dearly loved Bronwen Rowse, earlier this year but they are soldiering on. They are now looking

for someone with horticultural knowledge to fill the gap that Bronwen has left. The Wiri Rambler, with their head Kate Moodie, is as popular as ever and their very keen team provide the service as often as they can.

The Art Group with Lesley Alexander continues to flourish, with an exhibition on in the Visitor Centre at present. Our Library is a bit of a hidden gem and its volunteers our unsung heroes. Thank you to the people who man this excellent facility.

I'd like to pay tribute to our Committee members who work hard to make our organisation better and better. Our Vice-President Cleone Campbell is unflagging as she is involved in standing in for me when I'm away, re-writing the Constitution, organising Friends days out, Health & Safety, battling ideas around with me and she even has time to volunteer in the Edible Garden and at the Growing Friends! She also represents the Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens, speaking to other Garden Clubs.

I recently told Liz Powell that she is our mainstay - she just "knows it all". Liz has written a handbook for each Committee member, containing all the knowledge we require, including the terms of bequests, so that we can run our organisation efficiently. Liz has been involved with the running of Sculpture in the Gardens since its inception, she's on the Library Management Committee, in the Arts Group, and runs the Soup Day like clockwork. As she tells us "it'll be OK if you just DO AS YOU'RE TOLD!". Liz also labels and mails out the 300 copies of the newsletter all by herself, which is no mean feat.

Ross Ferguson undertook to prepare the draft of the new constitution - a huge job. He produces the excellent quarterly *The Auckland Garden* newsletter, for which he, very politely, makes sure we all meet

deadlines. I'm sure that you enjoy having it arrive in the mailbox as much as I do. Ross is involved with the Library, cooks a great soup and is a willing and accomplished speaker, either at our events or at other Garden Clubs.

Linda Christie, our Treasurer, puts in huge hours, particularly in the year that we hold the Sculpture in the Gardens as she pays stipends to each of the artists. She gets to know them quite well, she tells me. Artists aren't great at supplying bank account no's it seems. Linda liaises with our administrator Irene Horton and with Deidre Barry. She holds the purse strings - tightly.

Dianne Glenn, a Past President, is a very busy lady in her life outside the FABG but she still gives us her time and her expertise, especially when it comes to making submissions to the Council. I think we should hire her out. Dianne advocates for youth education in horticulture.

Deidre Barry attends Sculpture in the Gardens meetings and reports back to the Committee, is a willing worker around the Visitor Centre and is a wonderful, self-taught, cake decorator (she did our 40th Anniversary cake). She works in with Linda, keeping a beady eye on our finances.

Our Secretary Barbara Harvey is a great organiser - it is through her efforts that we toured Riverhaven Sculpture Park for free, saving \$25 each. She organises our bus trips, helps with Friends Days Out and organises the Staff morning tea, which is not the only reason she is a very popular lady!! She also oversees any alterations that are needed on our website.

I don't know how long Heather Hine has been on the Committee but she has her finger on the pulse, doesn't say much, but when she does it just makes sense. She

has been the hero of our photographic competition and is also involved with the Library.

New recruits to the Committee last year were Linden Johnson and Chris Allen. They've thrown themselves into the fray without hesitation and are always ready to lend a hand.

And, finally, our excellent administrator, Irene Horton. Irene's jobs involve minute-taking, banking and membership records. If you are late paying your sub it is her you'll be hearing from! But she will still be smiling her happy smile.

I have probably left out either people or their responsibilities from this list - for which I apologise. But my purpose is not

only to thank the people on the Executive Committee for their work this past year but to give you an idea of the tasks they are involved in on your behalf.

I am pleased to report that our membership is growing and our finances are in a healthy position - we made a profit of almost \$100,000 last financial year, thanks in a large part to Growing Friends, Wiri Rambler and higher interest rates on our investments.

We have had a very satisfying year and the Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens are in good heart.

Kind regards

Viv Canham
President

Auckland Botanic Gardens - Annual report 2023/2024

This annual report covers Botanic Gardens activities from 1 July 2023 until 30 June 2024.

Annual visitation to the Gardens was 1,048,776, a significant increase on the previous year.

On Tuesday 18 July around 20 staff from the Gardens and the Domain spent the day working in the Ayrliies wetland, as they have since 2001.

In late July members of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture celebrated the Institute's centenary by visiting the Domain and the Gardens. Saturday was spent at the Domain where Tracey Hartley (architect, Salmond Reed) spoke about the recent restoration and seismic strengthening of the Winter Gardens. Historian Lucy McIntosh then gave an account of the history of the Domain, and the day concluded with a guided tour of the Domain nursery.

Sunday was spent at the Gardens with award presentations, a talk by me on how gardens including ours are responding to climate change, and finally we planted two trees in our Gondwana Arboretum to mark the centenary. One of the trees, an *Araucaria angustifolia*, was dedicated to the memory of the late Graeme Platt.

Theft of metal and plants was an ongoing issue, including theft of parts of Richard Mathieson's *Reservoirs* sculpture, bronze plaques, and plants from various garden collections, our Nursery and Growing Friends nursery area.

Land acquisition

In October 2023 Auckland Council purchased 1.6 hectares (4 acres) of land at 120 Hill Road (ex-Nathan property) for \$12.37m. (Excluding GST, \$10.76m).

Mayor Wayne Brown stated that “We don’t have funds sitting in reserve for open space purposes, so the choice to debt-fund this acquisition is based on spreading the cost of a strategic capital investment across the generations that will use it”.

Council determined that the land will be protected in perpetuity under the Local Government Act 2002.

Subsequently the Friends contributed \$50,000 towards a review of the Master Plan. The first meeting of the Master Plan group was held on Wednesday 17 April. A site visit from Ngāti Tamaoho was hosted, and staff visited the Pourewa Māra kai, the Ngāti Whātua Community Garden at Ōrākei.

The house and the outbuildings at 120 Hill Rd (ex-Nathan property) were deconstructed in late March and April, and the area they occupied including the pool was levelled.

Most of the trees were assessed as unsafe, weedy or at end of life, and were removed in the period mid-May to mid-June. Younger trees in good condition were retained.

On 13 June removal of the trees along the footpath commenced. These included many dead and dying specimens that presented a hazard to pedestrians and vehicles. A chain link boundary fence will be installed that will be planted with the native climber *Muehlenbeckia complexa* to screen the property.

Friends & Volunteers

Total Botanic Gardens volunteer hours were 6,952 which is a return to pre-Covid levels and the highest figure since 2015/16.

Sculpture in the Gardens

Artist submissions for Sculpture in the Gardens were considered on 27 February and 16 works by 15 artists were selected.

Events

“Holding Ground” was formally opened on 16 November 2023 by Cr Christine Fletcher. It opened to the public on Saturday 18 November and ran daily until 3 March 2024. “Holding Ground” was curated by Cheryl Wright and included more than 320 artworks created by 45 artists.

The theme for “Eye on Nature” in March was the conservation of the Puhinui forest and Te Puhinui Awa. 1231 school children attended supported by 50 volunteers and 237 adult helpers.

The “Mushroom and other Fungi” exhibition of watercolours by New Zealand mycologist Marie Taylor (28 April 1930 – 24 April 1999) was held in autumn and proved extremely popular, as did the accompanying display of living mushrooms.

The Climate Change festival opened at the Gardens on 31 August and ran for a month. Speakers at the opening included Chloe Swarbrick M.P. and Cr Richard Hill.

The Gardens hosted the Matariki Festival Whanua Day on the public holiday on 28 June 2024. To coincide with Matariki there was an exhibition in the Visitor Centre Gallery of harakeke weaving from the weavers of Ngāti Tamaoho and some other events developed in partnership with Ngāti Tamaoho, the iwi manaaki (host iwi) for the Matariki Festival.

Plants and Gardens

On 18 August Dr Stephen Utick of the International Camellia Society presented a certificate recognising that our Camellia Garden remains an International Camellia Garden of Excellence.



Matariki celebrations

In September twenty-three cultivars from Alick McLeman's *Clivia* collection were planted in the Urban Trees Garden. These were evaluated in 2018 and selected mainly for the quality of their floral display. The rest of the Alick McLeman collection is located nearby in the Palm Garden.

Gardens staff visited Waikumete cemetery in October and November with botanist Ewen Cameron to survey the plant content in the wildflower meadow. During the latter visit numerous desirable species were lifted and potted up in the Gardens nursery for future inclusion in the trial meadow.

This meadow trial was established in the Trials Area in autumn. Sawdust was first incorporated into the soil, then seed, including browntop, sown and bulbs were planted.

Sawdust was spread beneath the trees north of the central lake in April to reduce the vigour of the grasses and other species so it can be more effectively maintained with a low-mow regime. Bulbs were then planted, firstly *Ornithogalum* followed by other species.

Renewals

The pergola in the Edible Garden was renewed in March with the new timber stained and the artwork *BeeHaven* reinstalled.

Education

7674 students participated in "Learning through Experience" programmes over the year. They were accompanied by 486 teachers and 1287 parent helpers.

Conservation & Research

In partnership with Auckland Council Environmental Services, 10 threatened species have been introduced into the Botanic Gardens collection over the past year to be planted in ex-situ collections. Species where environmental pressures are currently unable to be managed in the wild were targeted.

Ella Rawcliffe travelled with representatives from the Department of Conservation, the University of Auckland, Kaimai Kauri, and Plant and Food Research to a wānanga with Ngāti Kuri on how to deal with myrtle rust incursions. There is concern about the impact this disease might have on rātā moehau (*Metrosideros bartlettii*), and other culturally significant trees like the individual pōhutukawa at Te Rerenga Wairua / Cape Reinga.

Plants of kakabeak (*Clianthus puniceus*) have been grown to establish an ex-situ collection at the Gardens that will support future establishment of plants back in the wild. Propagation material was originally collected from the last known wild plants on Moturemu in the Kaipara Harbour. This species is thought to be extinct in the wild.

In June material was collected from *Davallia tasmanii* subsp. *cristata*, a fern that is "Threatened – Nationally Critical" since it only occurs on one bluff in the Puketi

forest. The material collected will be grown on in the nursery then be used to support translocations to other sites in Puketi.



The kakabeak (*Clianthus puniceus*)

Nursery

The nursery produced 60,000 native plants ready for revegetation plantings in Regional Parks.

Staff development

Jeff Jones was the Buchanan Award recipient for 2022, departing for the United States on Saturday 17 June 2023 and returning in mid-July.

Angela Anstis was the Buchanan Award recipient for 2023 and visited gardens in the United Kingdom. Joanna Mason was also provided with support towards undertaking a New Naturalism Tour in the United Kingdom, Netherlands and Germany from 25 August to 7 September 2023.

Several staff completed a Leadership Development programme in October 2023 funded by the Friends: Tracey Finlayson;

Jonathan Corvisy; Jiae Park; Shaun Rice; Joanna Mason; Jodie McDonnell; Owen Newson; Ella Rawcliffe; Shelley Small.

The NZ Gardens Trust conference in Blenheim in April was attended by Meg Spittal, Paul Swift, Tracy Dyett, Andrea Wright, Pippa Lucas and Jonathan Corvisy.

Tia Sugiura from the Winter Gardens, Harpreet Singh and Owen Newson from the Botanic Gardens Nursery attended the 53rd New Zealand International Plant Propagators' Society (IPPS) conference in Timaru from 4 to 7 of April.

The Tree Crops Society conference in April was attended by Laurence Speedy, Justine Newnham and Angela Anstis.

Nathan Anderson spent February-March at the Gardens for his Longwood Gardens (USA) Fellows field placement. The Fellows Program is a leadership development program, and the Gardens is the first New Zealand host.

Staff

We said farewell to Shelley Small on 20 February after 12 years as a visitor services representative. Christine (Crissy) Bieleski was appointed to replace Shelley Small and started on 29 April.

Lenny van Heugten resigned from her part time role as a visitor services representative in May but remained as a casual. Izzy Derbyshire was appointed to replace Lenny.

Morgan Crecelius commenced her horticultural apprenticeship on Tuesday 5 March.

Melanie Hawthorne resigned from her horticulturist role in December. She was replaced by Nathan (Nate) Burt who joined the horticultural team in February.

Domain

The Auckland Domain Winter Gardens were awarded a 5-star rating by the New Zealand Gardens Trust in January which equates to a Garden of National Significance.

Secure displays of rare plants have been installed in both the Temperate House and the Tropical House and are proving successful.

The Domain depot potting shed finally has a new roof, and the changing rooms were also renovated.

The historic band rotunda at the Domain was renewed.

Work continues on the development of a Domain Plant Collections Guidelines document to provide a framework for delivery of horticultural services. Emma Oliver is coordinating the project. Barbara Wheeler is compiling the individual collection statements.

Domain staff

Masa Fujita and Elise Jacobs both resigned from their Horticulturist positions in the Domain Horticultural Team. Propagator Jim Schroder accepted medical retirement in May.

Jack Hobbs, Manager



New books ordered for the library

Six legged ghosts – the insects of Aotearoa, Lily Duval

Dahlia kids, our journey into growing dahlias from seed in New Zealand, J. Ives et al.

Feijoa, a story of obsession and belonging, Kate Evans

Foraging New Zealand, Peter Langlands

The plant propagator's bible, Miranda Smith

Botanical art techniques, Carol Woodin and Robin Jess

Vascular plants of Tongariro Ecological District, M. Wilcox and N. Singen

Friends Art Group Report

A Trio of Exhibitions

Art exhibitions, three of them, seem to be taking up lots of our energy, thoughts and time at the moment.

As I write this, our annual exhibition, “Winter to Spring” is showing in the visitor centre gallery. Fifty artworks produced by twenty-one art group members make for a fabulous show! Many hours go into each piece and although the price never covers the time spent on them, it is often the love of the process, often very frustrating, rather than the end product that keeps us going.

I particularly love seeing new members, new to the group or new to painting, or both, exhibiting for the first time – it’s quite a daunting prospect putting your work out there but very gratifying when you see visitors stopping to look more closely at your work, or hear a positive comment. Of course, the ultimate thrill is when someone loves it enough to want to take it home.

Sales got off to a fantastic start which was exciting. By the third day we had sold four paintings and even more cards. By the time you read this, the exhibition will have finished, but hopefully a lot more will have sold. The more we sell, the more the Friends gain as 10% of all sales go to the Friends to put to good use around the Gardens.

This is the first time we have had a “People’s Choice” award where visitors are encouraged to vote for their favourite artwork. The artist who created the winning artwork receives a Gordon Harris voucher generously donated by the Friends. Already I have seen the benefit of this as a few visitors have said it made them look more carefully at the work rather than

take a quick walk through. I hope you took time to look at the beautiful artworks and voted for your favourite – I’m sure you will agree we had beautiful art on display!

Quite a few of our regular members are also members of the Botanical Art Society of New Zealand (BASNZinc) and will be thinking about what artworks to submit to the Society’s annual exhibition in September. This will be held in the Tree House Visitor Centre, in Wellington Botanic Gardens, another fantastic place to hold a botanical art exhibition. Fortunately for us, it coincides with their Spring Festival, so we are hoping for lots of visitors (and sales!) there too.

You may remember back in 2018, Auckland Botanic Gardens hosted the New Zealand part of the Botanical Art Worldwide, with our exhibition “Ngāi Tipu Taketake”. A huge undertaking and learning curve for us all, but wow, what an amazing experience for us all. Now it’s all happening again.

Botanical Art Worldwide 2025 is well underway, with over 30 countries taking part this time. Many art group members have been researching the theme “Crop Diversity” which aims to focus on and celebrate biodiversity in the crops that have been closely associated with mankind over thousands of years. The theme is designed to draw attention to the vast variety of food and useful plants available, in contrast with the relatively few cultivars currently used in mass cultivation. Plants eligible for inclusion are heritage crops and those cultivated for textiles, building, energy, and medicine. I anticipate a very varied and interesting range of plants in this exhibition.

Liz Powell, Sandra Morris, Megan Lockwood and I are on the steering committee and

already have Wellington Botanic Gardens and Ashburton Museum and Gallery lined up for the travelling component of the exhibition.

Again, it will be a juried exhibition and we are delighted that Ross Ferguson and Sri Kartawadi Benham have agreed to be on the selection committee again with Barbara Wheeler agreeing to be the third member of the team.

If you would like to know more about the whole exhibition, go to www.botanicalartnz.com or www.botanicalartworldwide.info

Lastly, here are some dates for your diary:

September 28 - bring your own work - great time to come and see what we get up to.

October 26 - Elizabeth Lewis and Irene Horton will be showing us how they each work in colour pencil but in different ways. Lots to learn from our own.

November 30 - End of year get together, with a shared morning tea and trading table.

If you are interested in joining us, or would like to know more about our group, either email me - lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com or ring on 021 1617070.

Lesley Alexander

Growing Friends

Bring on spring! The Growing Friends have been busy potting a vast range of plants for spring. Plant tables at the nursery are overflowing. Keen to spread their horticultural knowledge, the Growing Friends offer no-nonsense advice on spring planting.

Sales are held in the lower nursery:
Thursdays 9 a.m.–12 noon

First Sunday of the Month sales resume in September, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.

The Growing Friends salvaged plants from the site of the Nathan House before major site preparation works started. Plants were in high demand among garden enthusiasts who wanted to be part of this milestone in the history of the Auckland Botanic Gardens. Unfortunately, only about two *Kniphofia* are left at the

plant sales.

Last term, a group of school students and their teacher visited the lower nursery as part of a field trip. The students are studying towards NZCEA Horticulture. They swarmed the nursery with youthful energy and teenage charm. First, the students recognized a number of plants. Students surprised themselves that they knew more plants than they had previously thought. After a while, the students gained confidence and asked questions relating to their field trip assignment, e.g., questions about the sprinkler system or the qualifications of nursery volunteers. We could already tell that some have a genuine talent for horticulture. For now, the Growing Friends wish all of them the best of luck with NZCEA!

Hiltrud Gruger

Jack's update

Major works have been undertaken at 120 Hill Rd (ex-Nathan property) over the past few months. Following removal of the house and the outbuildings in late March, most of the trees were removed in the period mid-May to mid-June. It was tough to take out so many trees, but sadly the culled trees were all weedy or old and unsafe. Some younger trees in good condition were retained.

In June the decrepit treeline along the footpath at 120 Hill Rd was removed. It comprised mainly Lawson cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) and Japanese privet (*Ligustrum lucidum*) including several dead or dying specimens and presented a hazard to pedestrians and vehicles as well as being an eyesore, so it is a relief to have it removed. Shortly a chain link boundary fence will be installed that will be planted with *Muehlenbeckia complexa*. We have used this "fedge" combination extensively at the Gardens and it is very effective, being attractive, low maintenance and graffiti-proof.

Recent work by the Master Plan teams on this project has included consulting with Riki Bennett, a recognized expert in Mātauranga Māori (traditional Māori knowledge). He has been an invaluable source of information and has provided us with an advisory document entitled "The Natural World of Māori". The Gardens have had a long and valued association with Riki who is a ranger in Regional Parks where he has responsibility for Cascades Kauri Park in the Waitākere Ranges.

We have recently undertaken works to

partially redress the serious degradation of the Puhinui Stream banks caused by the impact of dogs accessing the stream. Priority has been given to restoring soil and native vegetation beneath a mature rimu which has had its roots exposed by the erosion caused by dogs, and which was suffering a serious decline in health and under threat of potentially toppling into the stream. The Gardens team have designed a system that uses EcoCoir socks to retain soil on the sloping stream banks beneath the tree. After planting the area has been fenced to safeguard the plants from dogs as they establish. If this technique works effectively it will be replicated on other badly damaged banks along the Puhinui Stream.

Around 10,000 visitors enjoyed the Matariki Festival at Auckland Botanic Gardens in late June. This event was the culmination of a month of activities held at the Botanic Gardens that included two harakeke weaving workshops, three stargazing events, and a ball for Ngāti Tamaoho kaumātua in the visitor centre Huakawaiwaka.

Festival visitor numbers greatly exceeded expectations and it was a bit chaotic with cars parked everywhere including lining the neighbouring streets. Highlights included wonderful music, great kai and a laser show as dusk arrived to conclude festivities. This was the first Matariki festival held at the Botanic Gardens in partnership with Ngāti Tamaoho, and although there are some things we will do differently at next year's event it proved very successful.

Sculpture in the Gardens is approaching fast, with the opening on 16 November and closing 2 March. We are very grateful to Bill and Maggie Burrill for so generously sponsoring the ever-popular People's Choice Award.

October will see the release of Hebe The Gardener, the first new hybrid I have introduced since 2000 when my life got a bit busy for plant breeding. However, a few years ago I decided to resume and began pollinating 'Wiri Mist' with other outstanding cultivars hoping to produce a new range of hybrids with outstanding garden qualities in a range of flower

colours.

The Gardener has been selected as part of the 80th anniversary celebrations for *New Zealand Gardener* magazine with which I have had a long association since my first article was published in 1989. It has many of the qualities of 'Wiri Mist', being compact and disease resistant but with flowers in a shade I describe as pinkish lilac, but others see as lavender pink. Flowering is most abundant in summer although flowers appear sporadically at other times (see back cover for photograph).

Jack Hobbs

Introducing Izzy

Izzy Derbyshire is the new face in our Visitor Services team. When Izzy settled near the Waitakere Ranges in 2012 her new environment was in stark contrast to the urban English landscapes she was accustomed to. This spurred an interest in nature that led her to undertake history and environmental studies at Massey University. She soon realised that our history is mainly environmental as we have relatively little built history, so she focussed on the environment. More studies are planned including possibly a master's in environmental planning to help fulfil her desire to make a significant contribution to conservation.

When Izzy spotted the advertisement for the Gardens role it really fitted with her passion for people and connecting them with nature. She loves that entry to the Gardens is free and aims to help achieve our goal of making nature

accessible to everyone and connecting them with plants. Izzy has a very upbeat and outgoing personality and already is making a great contribution to the services we deliver to our visitors.

Jack Hobbs



Bronwen Margaret Rowse 1948–2024

We were all shocked to hear of Bronwen's sudden collapse and death while she was on holiday in the United States. As the funeral notice so accurately noted, "You always knew when Bronwen entered a space, now the void she has left is deafening."

Bronwen had many talents. She had a New Zealand Certificate of Science in geology, working for a time as a metallurgical chemist at NZ Steel. She then studied for a National Certificate in Horticulture in Nursery Management with the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture and took a degree in media studies. She also gained a Certificate in Rehabilitation Studies from Massey University.

She worked for nursery firms such as Botannix Garden Centre, Manurewa, the Wholesale Tree Company, Palmers Garden Centre, Papakura and Duncan & Davies. In 1992 she took up a position with the Framework Trust for which she established and then managed a commercial production nursery to assist rehabilitation to work and to community life for people who had experienced mental illness. Her work there attracted international interest and in 1994 and 1996 she travelled to Keene, New Hampshire, USA to assist groups setting up projects similar to that she directed in Auckland. In 1997 she presented a rehabilitation case study at the Conference of the American Horticultural Therapy Association in Michigan, USA.

Bronwen had her own small lifestyle block in South Auckland with fruit trees,

edible and medicinal plants, a few sheep and too many hens. She knew the reality of growing plants and had a broad encompassing knowledge of plants and their requirements, especially the requirements for propagation. She had an almost miraculous ability to persuade cuttings to grow. Bronwen first joined the Growing Friends at the instigation of Sue Davison. Then when Graeme Hauer retired from that position she took over as the coordinator of the group. She excelled in letting the individual members of the Growing Friends be self-motivating but as part of a group. Her sense of humour and her commonsense allowed her to resolve differences before they became festering problems. Her leadership was both relaxed and supportive. Perhaps her experience with the Framework Trust was of benefit.

Bronwen was involved in many community activities including more than 20 years with the Glenbrook Hockey Club as a player, coach, secretary, president and referee. She was a member of horticultural groups including the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (member of the Auckland Branch Committee), the Auckland Garden History Society, the International Plant Propagators' Society and the New Zealand Tree Crops Association for which she served a term as president. She was elected a Fellow of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture in 1998. Bronwen was a member of the Friends for many years and was elected an Honorary Life Member in 2022.

She is survived by two daughters, Anita and Rachel, and four grandchildren.

I knew Bronwen for nearly 30 years. I admired her for her directness, her ability

to get things done, her willingness to take on tasks. Behind that, at times, superficially tough, no-nonsense exterior, was a real person, generous, kind-hearted and supportive. Many will miss her.

Ross Ferguson



Membership subscription

There are still a number of outstanding membership subscriptions for the 2024/25 financial year which runs from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. Notices for these were included in the June newsletter and we rely on members to pay within a reasonable time. If your subscription is outstanding and you wish to renew, please pay this promptly.

Members not currently financial in November will be considered to have resigned and this will be your last newsletter.

Subscriptions may be paid by eftpos or cash at the Visitor Centre or by direct deposit (ASB 12-3011-0757619-00). Please put your name on the bank transfer and indicate that this is a membership renewal.

Memberships:

Individual:	\$25.00
Family/partner:	\$30.00
Student:	\$10.00
Affiliate Group:	\$30.00

Friends Spring Bus Trip

We head over the Harbour Bridge to three very different gardens:

Mincher Garden is a large formal garden of International Significance 6 Star, featuring native walkways and waterways.

Rosie Lea is an extensive family garden with an orchard and trees. There are unusual areas and unusual plants.

Totara Waters is a subtropical garden of National Significance. An idyllic place to inspire and enjoy and solve any of your garden problems. Plants are for sale here.

Friends are welcome to bring friends.

Any queries phone: Cleone Campbell 021 212 8579 or Barbara Harvey 027 2865671 or 09 2638801

When:	Saturday 2 November Leave at 8.30 a.m.
Where:	Meet outside the Visitor Centre, Auckland Botanic Gardens
Cost:	\$50pp Includes entry fees (costs subsidised by the Friends)
Return:	Approx. 4.30 p.m., traffic dependent
Bring:	Lunch, drinks, walking shoes, raincoat and money to buy plants
Book by:	20 October
Payment:	Pay online to account 12-3011-0757619-000 before 20 October. State "Bus Trip" and your name OR pay at the Visitor Centre.

Farewell to good friends

Shona Pitcaithly has retired from the Growing Friends after 25 years of invaluable service as she and husband Bruce leave their home near the Gardens for life in a retirement village.

Shona joined the Friends Executive Committee prior to 2000 and has been supporting the Gardens ever since. She helped out with plant sales back when they were held on the old covered courtyards and attracted hordes of keen buyers, and has been volunteering in this capacity ever since. She has also

helped in many other capacities, always smiling and although quiet a very good communicator and great salesperson.

Bruce has also been an active volunteer much respected by those who have known and worked with him. Both are esteemed by all who know them and will always be remembered fondly by their many friends. We wish Shona and Bruce all the very best, and we hope to see you many more times at the Gardens.

Jack Hobbs

Tasting the exotic - needn't cost your pocket nor the planet

Naturally sweeter, some with subtropical or “citrusy” undertones, homegrown bananas are distinct from their imported ‘Cavendish’ counterparts.

Most imported ‘Cavendish’ bananas are sprayed during growing and subjected to a number of chemical postharvest treatments, (principally to control Panama disease). They are then sprayed with fumigants at our border, and finally receive ethylene gas to artificially induce ripening.

Here in New Zealand, especially the northern regions, our transitioning climate means that a range of edible banana hybrids can be grown at home. Trials further south are now taking place including in Taranaki (renowned magnolia breeder, Vance Hooper) and Buller (West Coast Tree Crop chair, Jon Colyer). Three years ago, Jon visited Auckland Botanic

Gardens and acquired, through the Growing Friends, offshoots from the established ‘Pisang Awak’ bananas. The recent photographs below illustrate how, even in Buller, certain bananas in the right microclimate can succeed.

Where to plant bananas

- Ideally in a sheltered position that receives good daily sun, for instance the northeastern or northern side of a shelter belt.
- Compact cultivars can be planted on the north side of a building or wall.
- Avoid high, dry and/or exposed areas.
- Also avoid very low lying areas that are subject to waterlogging or frost.
- Bananas perform best in soils that are moisture retentive (not sodden) and fertile. Bananas are heavy feeders.

Photograph: Jon Colyer (West Coast Agroforestry, Buller, West Coast South Island)





Photograph: Jon Colyer (West Coast Agroforestry)

The below photo is of a banana circle:

- banana suckers are planted on an elevated circular mound enclosing a pit.
- companion plants like taro can be interplanted to stabilize the mound base.
- over time compost, prunings, and

organic matter are fed into the pit.

Such a design can optimise growing conditions for bananas. Strategically placed pits can essentially capture water and nutrients, allowing mounded banana suckers to access what they need when they need it.

Banana circle. Photograph: Geoffrey Mansell (Kotare Subtropicals, Maungatapere, Northland)



Growing and maintaining bananas

Unlike trees, bananas are essentially sucker-bearing herbaceous perennials. Suckers grow and elongate as pseudostems which can only bear one inflorescence and one bunch of bananas. Room must be made in a clump to allow new and upcoming pseudostems to develop and bear future bunches.

Established bananas in the home garden can become overcrowded.

Thin and prune bananas regularly by:

- cutting off the top two thirds of the finished/already harvested pseudostem - leave the bottom most third to rot down and feed new suckers.
- remove any spent leaves.

Mulch simultaneously by simply chopping and dropping all thinnings and prunings immediately around banana clumps or inside established banana circles.

It is also considered beneficial to ideally limit/thin out suckers, so that each banana corm has just 3 upcoming suckers, that is an upcoming pseudostem and 2 well-spaced juvenile pseudostems.

The photograph opposite is a maturing banana inflorescence - closely spaced bananas enlarge at the upper end, whilst the lower end bears a flower bell. This flower bell is best removed, so that the plant can put energy into developing the upper most bananas.

Commercial growers cover banana bunches with coloured mesh or plastic bags to speed up fruit development and limit blemishing.



Photograph: Geoffrey Mansell (Kotare Subtropicals, Maungatapere, Northland)

Cultivars to consider

Broadly speaking there are 3 classes of edible banana hybrids available in NZ:

- Lady Finger cultivars: 'Pisang Awak' (syn. Ducasse), 'Pacha Naadan' and 'Misi Luki'. Most widely available class in New Zealand. The fruit has a nice sweet, creamy flesh; however some have thin skin that can be prone to splitting.
- Honduran cool temperate cultivars: 'Gold Finger', 'High Noon', 'Bonanza'.

Bred in the highlands of Honduras by the Honduras Foundation for Agricultural Research. Properties like thicker skin (less splitting), cold resistance, lower heights, better shelf life and transportation ability and having a creamy tangy taste make them a popular choice for commercial growers in New Zealand. Also worth considering in the home garden.

- Backyard Cavendish cultivars: 'Williams', 'Grande Naine', 'Cavendish'. These three examples have proved to be the most cool-tolerant of the Cavendish cultivars in New Zealand, reaching 3-4 m. Some are occasionally affected by "choke throat", a condition where cool temperatures limit the development and emergence of the inflorescence and subsequent banana bunches. It is best to cut down stems affected by "choke throat".

Compact cultivars

- 'Dwarf Cavendish' - regrettably has low cold tolerance, only worth growing in a tunnel house or as a landscape feature.
- 'Rajapuri' (Indian Lady Finger) – height, 1.8–2.4 m, reasonably cold tolerant, though occasionally develops "choke throat" in winter.

Geoffery Mansell has a wide range of edible banana hybrids for sale at his nursery in Maungatapere, Whangarei.

Visit <https://www.kotaresubtropicals.co.nz>

Versatile plant with future potential

- Edible flowers - The edible flower bell

is regarded as a nutritional superfood and considered a delicacy in South East Asian cooking. It is the basis of "vegan fish and chips".

- NZ Banana industry - Still in its infancy - small scale commercial operators are mostly in Northland. Geoff Mansell of Kotare Subtropicals is currently growing a range of bananas to supply to local supermarkets in Maungatapere, Northland. There is scope to further grow and develop a local banana industry in the upper North Island.
- Banana Research in New Zealand - (Information from Dr Jane Mullaney, Riddet Institute Associate Researcher and Adjunct Senior Researcher, Massey University).
 - Many banana selections already here in New Zealand are of unknown parentage. Between 2018 and 2020 AgResearch led the Tai Pukenga banana project, which DNA-sequenced banana selections from Tairāwhiti and Northland and compared the sequences with known cultivars from Australia.
 - In 2022, Aotearoa Bananas (project funded by High-Value Nutrition) researched the potential benefits of NZ-grown bananas on infant gut health. Known cultivars of NZ-grown bananas were investigated to see whether there were differences in fruit composition and if so, what potential impact this could have on infant gut microbiology and health.

Laurence Speedy

Missouri Botanic Garden visit in April 2024

Walking through the grand entrance building and out into the huge Missouri Botanic Garden in its spring glory was a joy to remember.

One of the USA's gardens of significance, it was opened in 1859 by the philanthropist, Henry Shaw, who left a wonderful legacy which is not only a public garden but one which is a world leader in plant science, conservation and sustainability. Its mission: "To discover and share new knowledge about plants and their environment in order to preserve and enrich life".

Each season brings its attractions, and beds of spring bulbs such as tulips, daffodils, fritillaries, etc. didn't disappoint. The azaleas in the Japanese garden, the peonies in the Chinese garden with its magnificent, round, Moon gate entrance, the English woodland garden, ponds, dogwoods, so much to see!

The real eye catcher was the Climatron, a geodesic dome, of heat-strengthened glass panels, containing a plastic interlayer, housing plants of every shape and size from the tropics, many rare, supplemented by a humidity-enriching



waterfall. Tempting though it was to stay in the warmth, we enjoyed the beauty of a wide range of bronze sculptures, some quietly shy, such as a child gazing at the flowers, bronze quail on low branches and many others.

Mindful that time wouldn't allow us to see it all, we bypassed the Butterfly House.

The Kemper Centre area with the home gardener in mind is the largest nonprofit gardening information centre in the USA and an information hub for the mid-west. The trial and experimental gardens have found that with increased minimum temperatures the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone in the Greater St Louis region has moved from Zone 6a/6b to almost entirely Zone 7, since the last update in 2012. Online the Center also provides detailed resources for combating garden pests and diseases.

Plant discovery is an important feature and each year the Science and Conservation staff discover and name an average of 200 plant species new to science, some critically endangered.

One of the Garden's largest international science and conservation programmes began in the 1970s in Madagascar, one of the most biodiverse regions on Earth. Their staff are helping the local Malagasy people co-manage protected sites. The Garden's botanists have collected more than 175,000 herbarium specimens and have discovered thousands of species.

Although there is a \$16.00 charge for visitors, less for ratepayers, the gardens are supplemented by a team of volunteers who assist the staff in the efficient running of these magnificent gardens.

Linden Johnson



Longwood Fellow's field placement

As a Fellow at Longwood Gardens, located in the United States outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, I was given the opportunity for a two-month field placement at an international public garden. The intent of the placement is to learn from the garden leadership about operations, programming, horticultural practices, audience engagement, financial considerations, and organizational culture in an immersive residency. I was so fortunate to be able to partner with Auckland Botanic Gardens.

The Longwood Fellows Program is a competitive leadership program preparing high-potential professionals for high-impact roles in public horticulture. I am currently on sabbatical from my position as Landscape Arboretum Director at Winona State University in Minnesota to be a part of this program. Fellows refine their leadership skills by heightening self-awareness, engaging experts and thought leaders, and absorbing customized training on topics like nonprofit management, organizational behavior, strategic planning, and team development. The program grafts theory with practice, offering Fellows the opportunity to conduct case-based discussions, learn from regional and global public horticulture leaders, and engage in pragmatic learning via departmental immersions, a research-based cohort project focused on addressing pressing issues in public horticulture, as well as this field placement with a partner organization.

Before I ever stepped foot in Aotearoa

New Zealand, I had been told of the culture of New Zealand public gardens and how Kiwis were not inclined to pay for a horticultural experience, particularly when the entire context of living on this island paradise is one of lush greenery and endless majestic vistas. Free and open to the public with a million-plus visitors per year, I learned many people come to Auckland Botanic Gardens for a mere leisurely park experience. I was encouraged to see how staff embrace this significant opportunity to expose a diverse audience to the benefits of horticulture and ecological sustainability through various delivery modes.

Indeed, upon my arrival in February, my initial reaction was one of awe. There are amazing plants and landscapes at every turn in New Zealand: at the Auckland Botanic Gardens (the Rock Garden and its aloe collection emerged as one of my favorites), at the numerous other Auckland gardens and parks I visited, along roadsides through the ancient volcanic terrain, at the endless beaches, and all points beyond. The breadth and depth of the plant variety I experienced was overwhelming. I was the proverbial kid in the candy store, except I knew so few of the sweets by name. I soaked up the eye candy just the same.

Taking Auckland Botanic Gardens' motto "Where Ideas Grow" to heart, I embarked experiencing how a public garden on the other side of the world operates and engages. ABG is never truly closed with its porous borders; I quickly learned how this reality informs and challenges

the Gardens' people and resources. It is admirable how the staff care for an immense and popular public property and undertakes a vast array of initiatives, from thoughtful and compelling programming to public and reserved events, and most importantly maintaining a diversity of horticultural collections and promoting accessible conservation efforts.

ABG operations and activities

I was grateful to spend quality time with ABG leadership, starting with Manager Jack Hobbs. I took note of the organizational culture he has created, and the can-do spirit evidenced throughout the Gardens, programs, and place in the community. I will hold up Jack as a public garden role model in how he led the pivot to community engagement to promote ABG as a resource for home gardeners, and a universal place to engage people with plants, where you also could learn something about horticulture, ecological systems, and the environment, incidentally or comprehensively through numerous interpretation activities. The *Star Performers* and *Plants for Auckland* programs are vibrant examples of effectively engaging visitors and delivering meaningful information.

I see the last point of ABG's mission statement regarding community inspiration as the common thread for ABG operationally and experientially. Building on a captive audience, with many visitors who are not necessarily "plant people", creates an open pipeline for education and the expansion of thoughts about sustainability, green infrastructure, resource protection, and ecological horticulture. A fully engaged and fiscally-sound Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens volunteer group is a critical piece of ABG's community engagement success story. I will be modeling the development of my own institution's Friends group after this highly engaged group. Activities have supported both significant capital projects and on-going staff development by sponsoring employees' attendance at conferences and educational opportunities domestically and abroad. I was inspired by the essential partnerships ABG has developed as evidenced by the annual Eye on Nature student program. I chaperoned one of the student rotations and was captivated by the students' enthusiasm as they bounded between each outdoor classroom, witnessing the seeds of environmental stewardship being sown.

Winter Gardens Site Manager Jonathan Corvisy, Manager Jack Hobbs, and Longwood Fellow Nathan Anderson at Auckland Domain Winter Gardens.



Working alongside Micheline Newton, Visitor Services Manager, and Barbara Wheeler, Curator and Longwood Fellow alumnus, I was fortunate to contribute to various projects, including the latest market research efforts to identify outward-focus for the next 5 years of programming and events, planning for the next Sculpture in the Gardens, a bi-annual competitive public art exhibition with major works sited throughout the gardens, and the formalization of presentation guidelines for the horticultural team. As Jack says, “gardens grow but need guardrails.” The guideline workshops facilitated by Barbara engaged staff in defining and refining what horticultural expectations and excellence look like at ABG.

I also was able to join a staff meeting with Auckland Council’s masterplanning department to discuss next steps for developing the recently acquired Nathan property. With the potential to become a traditional Māori garden, this project will be a highly visible ABG example of integrating Auckland Council’s Māori Outcomes framework addressing well-being by focusing on the Council initiatives that matter most to indigenous populations. The Gardens and its connection with native plants are a direct vehicle for engaging Māori on the land, as also exemplified by the Pā Harekeke Collection. Observing these dynamics led me to draw parallels to the work we have begun at my home institution and across the United States to acknowledge the impact of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples and what steps can be taken to mediate that history into positive change today.

I participated in a seed-collecting

expedition to Karekare Beach with Emma Simpkins, Auckland Council’s Senior Regional Advisor on threatened species, Ella Rawcliffe, ABG Botanical Records and Conservation Specialist, and Owen Newson, ABG Propagator. We went on the hunt for spike sedge (*Eleocharis neozelandica*), a regionally critical plant that Emma had observed in this particular area previously. While I was of minimal help in locating this tiny species, the team successfully harvested seed. I deeply appreciated being a part of this critical mission-based work, and to see in action how the Council and ABG partnership leverages ABG’s expertise and facilities to sustain vulnerable species.

With Jack’s long tenure, conversations around how ABG continues to evolve provided rich exploration on leadership and organizational culture. With his plant breeder background, I see how the Gardens’ DNA has been rooted in a true love of horticulture and sustained through plant propagation, trials, and conservation. My hope is ABG retains Jack’s vibrant passion and legacy well into the future.

Beyond ABG

Beyond ABG, I was able to traverse both North and South Islands, visiting a wide range of botanic gardens and public estates. This included members of Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand (BGANZ) such as Christchurch Botanic Gardens, Dunedin Botanic Garden, and Hamilton Gardens. At DBG I had a great tour and conversation with Alan Matchett, Manager, and Dylan Norfield, Horticultural Collections Supervisor. Dunedin Botanic Garden is comparable in structure to ABG in reporting to Dunedin City Council and being a free garden

utilized by a large community, particularly the student population of the adjacent University of Otago. Hamilton Gardens was another spectacle experience where the site features 28 gardens representing the art, beliefs, lifestyles and traditions of different civilizations or historical garden styles. I met with Gus Flower, Manager, and founder, designer, and original manager Peter Sergel. With my landscape design background, I was engrossed as Peter shared how this collection of distinct gardens essentially creates a modern museum of garden designs telling the history of humanity. A truly exceptional place.

Using the New Zealand Gardens Trust (NZGT) and colleagues' recommendations, I explored so many other fantastic gardens, including Ayrlies Gardens & Wetlands, Broadfield Garden,

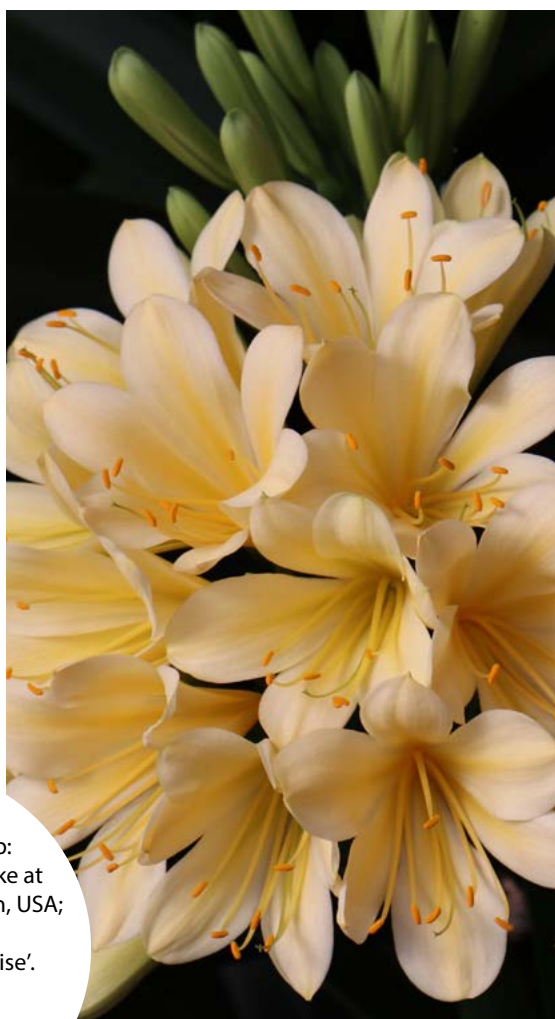
Larnach Castle, and The Giant's House. I was also fortunate to join a visit with Dr. Keith Hammett, internationally renowned dahlia breeder, and learn of his life's work bringing the now-ubiquitous species from Mexico to the world in its myriad beloved varieties.

The rich ecological experiences, learning opportunities with so many garden leaders, and cultural traditions of New Zealand combined to provide a truly memorable field placement journey. The people, plants, and place are imprinted in my heart. I am so grateful for everyone that contributed to this adventure, and I look forward to one day again visiting the many horticultural wonders of the "land of the long white cloud."

Nathan Anderson

Longwood Fellow Nathan Anderson, ABG Curator and Longwood Fellow alumnus Barbara Wheeler, and ABG Visitor Services Manager Micheline Newton in the Potter Children's Garden





Clockwise from top:
A bed of tulips and bike at
Missouri Botanic Garden, USA;
Clivia 'Toshi' and
Clivia 'Summer Surprise'.



Hebe The Gardener, bred by Jack Hobbs



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