

Newsletter



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Chairman's Comments

We live in interesting times indeed. As I write, the last couple of weeks in northern parts has seen much more rain than usual for this time of year, gardens are luxurious and lawns need cutting every week. Yet around Taranaki, Wellington and further south desperately parched landscapes are the norm. Is this the greenhouse effect we hear so much about? Is global warming really starting to hit us where it hurts? Or are these unusual weather patterns just part of the natural cycle of events and things will be back to normal soon?

Modern technology allows us to debate these questions and listen to all sides of a story. It is possible for news, or a message, to spread around the world quicker than ever before, and the recent David Attenborough programme "State of the Planet" is food for thought for all of us interested in the natural environment.

Whatever the cause of our unpredictable weather and changes in the environment, gardening and a passion for plants is still as strong as ever. Whether you like the way gardening is portrayed on nation-wide television or not, the programmes are popular. Those of you who use the internet have probably noticed garden-related websites cropping up all over the place too and they also seem to be well received. The Institute internet website is no exception. Our webmaster, Murray Dawson, reports the site now receives about 1,200 hits per month, a huge increase on just a few months ago. This is the number of internet users who visit our website. These are people who want to find out what the Institute has to offer, or are using our site to search for information on plants or as a link to other related sites. Thanks to Murray's voluntary commitment we are keeping up with the times. Recently the President of the Australian Institute of Horticulture congratulated us on the quality of our website.

Administration

As the song says, "the times they are a-changing."

Enid Reeves, who has served the Institute for 21 years, has decided it is time to give up regular work at the end of March and join her husband Don in retirement. They intend to spend time on things other than work, including travel overseas. Over the years Enid has been the most stable person in the Institute. Now working one day a week, she was full-time in the days when RNZIH was the governing body for Horticultural qualifications. We are indebted to Enid for such a long and dependable commitment and wish her and Don all the best for the future.

The executive is working towards a replacement for Enid and will report progress in the next newsletter.

Horticultural training

This topic has been raised several times over the last few years. There is a feeling among some members that training needs, as well as trainee aspirations, are not always met by current NZQA qualifications. However the Institute no longer has the structure or funds to become involved in mainstream horticultural training. But we can still see some opportunities. The executive has approved that our President, John Taylor, and Dr Ron Close further consider the feasibility of a RNZIH Master of Horticulture qualification. The objective of the M. Hort. would be to offer horticulturists a qualification recognising very high standards in Horticultural skills and craftsmanship, horticultural technology and horticultural science, an area that seems to be lacking in recognition at present. We will keep you posted on progress.

Publications

In the last New Zealand Garden Journal all members received a flyer for the latest Institute publication, the International Register of Hebe Cultivars. This is the culmination of many years work by Lawrie Metcalf with significant contributions from Professor Philip Garnock-Jones and Dr Peter Heenan and in the last year Mike Oates has put in a lot of time and energy managing the various stages to final

publication. You are encouraged to take the opportunity to buy a copy at the pre-publication 20% discount and to promote it to any person or organisation you think may be interested in buying it. Any profit from sales of the book will go into a publication fund with the express intention of future Institute-funded publications. We hope this to be the first of many in the new millennium.

Best regards to all members and may it rain on your garden only at night and be fine and sunny every day.

Andrew Maloy

Our Administration Officer Retires

In 1980 when over nine hundred students were enrolled for the Institute's National Diploma in Horticulture examinations Enid Reeves joined the staff. She is now retiring after serving the Institute since that time in a loyal and exemplary manner. Ashley Foubister, who appointed Enid, was the secretary at the time and the office comprised one room on the ground floor at the northern end of the Hilgendorf Wing at Lincoln College (now Lincoln University)

During her twenty one years with the Institute, Enid has looked after much of the detailed requirements of five Executive Chairmen, John Taylor, Alan Jolliffe, Mike Oates, David Shillito, Ron Flook and more recently Andrew Maloy. She served under several secretaries (later termed Executive Officers), namely David Cameron, Roger McCarthy and Dennis Wall.

When student numbers grew to over twelve hundred she was appointed Examinations Officer. The recording of massive information about students from all parts of New Zealand regarding their examination details was done on punch card readers before the days of the modern computer. She then mastered the use of the Macintosh computer, followed by the IBM. Chairman of the Examinations Board through all this time was Dr. Ron Close and he testifies to the immaculate and flawless detail that Enid brought to the Exam Board requirements.

Details of students were not the only requirement. Membership, which included students, rose dramatically. Due to space difficulties at Lincoln at this time the office moved from the Hilgendorf Block to Ivy Hall, then to a room in the Agricultural Engineering Department and finally to Annex A where it is located today.

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An outstanding gift of Enid Reeves was her ability to keep infinite detail of all the Institute's affairs. She dealt with correspondence, data recording, exam report writing and a host of other matters too diverse to mention. Her skill in finding answers to countless numbers of telephone enquiries was legend.

Over the years, in her quiet, unassuming and friendly way she became to be recognised as the voice of the Institute. During her time of office she knew the operational business of the Institute better than anyone. Enid Reeves was highly respected by all who came to know her and we wish her a happy and fulfilling retirement.

John Taylor



Notable Trees Report



Work on Notable Trees NZ moves forward a step now that I have relinquished the Chair of the RNZIH. Many registrations for Notables Trees have been recorded and accepted.

Rob Graham of the Waikato Polytechnic Arboricultural Course has made NTNZ registrations a course assignment. This is most welcome as the students firstly learn the purpose of registering trees and then how to do it. Marks are given for this course assignment which ensures rigour in the documentation. This is helpful, time saving and valuable both in recording and in the attendant researches. The following are recent registrations :

Reg. no. 360 Group of 8 native trees in Te Awanga Hastings by Bruce Allport. Dimensions Height max. 17m. area spread 500 sq.m.

Reg. no. 361 *Quercus robur* in Gordonton Waikato by Geoff Clarke. Dimensions Height 20m. spread 28m. girth 1.05m.

Reg. no. 362 *Quercus imbricaria* in Anglican Cemetery Tauranga by Robert Burnell. Dimensions Height 24m. spread 29.80m. girth 1.90m.

Reg. no. 363 *Cupressus sempervirens* at All Saints Church Howick by Bryce Pomfrett. Dimensions Height 13.20m. spread 6.30m. girth 1.90m.

Reg. no. 364 *Sequoia sempervirens* 'Pendula' in Rotorua Government Gardens by M.L. Paget. Dimensions Height 24.50 m. spread 6.60m. girth 3.75m.

Reg. no. 365 *Fraxinus excelsior* in Gudex Memorial Park Sanatorium Hill Waipa by Cameron Smith.

Dimensions Height 17m. spread 23m. girth 3.50m.

Reg. no. 366 *Quercus suber* in Te Awamutu Cemetery Waikato by Guy Dunlop. Dimensions Height 26m. spread 26.30m. girth 6.90m.

Reg. no. 367 *Cedrus atlantica* Queenwood Rd. Levin by S. Whittaker. Dimensions Height 26m. spread 13.50m. girth 2.95m.

Reg. no. 368 *Abies firma* in Victoria Street Cambridge by Matthew Elliot. Dimensions Height 28m. spread 13.50m. girth 4.15m.

Also undertaken by Waikato students were two theses.

A Review of Tree Protection Systems used by Local Authorities throughout NZ. Fraser Robinson.

A Review of S.W. Burstall's Notable Tree Listing for Hamilton City. Shona Moohan.

Shona Moohan's work revealed some alarming news. Out of 86 trees listed in Hamilton City 31 major trees have been removed. This leaves 55 trees existing.

It can only be speculated as to the national losses since Burstall did his listing 1969/1972. The Hamilton District Council proposed trees for their Heritage Tree List number 29 only. These numbers should strike pity in the hearts of tree lovers.

A recent brief visit to Blenheim was interesting. The few trees I had time to visit were healthy and had their Notable Tree labels well placed and intact.

I have been invited to give a paper at the Big Tree Conference in Tokyo in March. The Southern hemisphere will have only one representative speaker and three from the North. This does reinforce our international importance and the recognition for our history of Big Trees and the work done by the RNZIH since 1978 for Notable Trees. It is sometimes hard to comprehend the apathy in this country.

The conference lasts for 2 days and will include seminar sessions to look at ways of conserving and protecting big old trees. International administrative solutions and social support mechanisms will be featured. In NZ we work as volunteers and it is unusual to find one being offered an all expenses paid business class trip to Tokyo and back. Does this not speak volumes for the international interest and funding available for what I term the dinosaurs of the Plant Kingdom. This international attention might turn the tide for us in New Zealand. I will do my best and report back on the proceedings.

Ron Flook
NTNZ National Registrar

Newsletter copy Deadlines

The Canterbury Branch Newsletter Editors welcome all contributions from members for the Newsletter.

These can be sent to :
Newsletter Editors, RNZIH, P.O. Box 12, Lincoln University, Canterbury.

Deadline Dates :

No. 1	28 February
No. 2	30 June
No. 3	31 August
No. 4	23 November

Notes for Authors of the New Zealand Garden Journal

- The NZ Garden Journal is a professional journal aimed at those with an in depth interest in plants, gardens and open space. Articles should treat issues in detail but are not expected to be of refereed journal standard.
- The Journal is published twice a year in June and December. **Copy dates are April 15th and October 15th respectively.**
- Papers should be a maximum of 4000 words.
- Papers should be typed in double spacing on A4 sized paper, leaving a margin of at least 30mm on the left. Type face should be a minimum of point size 12 in Times New Roman or similar. Sheets should be numbered consecutively. One hard copy of the article is required.
- Papers should include photographs and/or illustrations if necessary. Photographs should be supplied ideally as black and white prints of at least 150 x 200mm with identification in pencil in reverse. Colour slides are acceptable provided they are identified on the cover. Captions should be typed at the end of the paper. All original photographs and slides will be returned.
- Articles should be supplied on disc in Microsoft Word or RTF format. Any particularly complex tables should be supplied as separate excel files. They can also be e mailed to the editor as an attachment.
- Authors will not receive papers back for proofing unless they specify this when submitting the paper. Papers will only be returned to authors if major editorial changes are required.
- Authors will receive a complimentary copy of the Journal on publication. Additional copies will be available at cost.
- References should follow the convention of author and date in the text - Naylor and Johnson (1937) - and should be listed at the end of the paper as follows:

Naylor, E.E. and Johnson, B. 1937: A Histological Study of Vegetative Reproduction in *Saintpaulia ionantha*. *American Journal of Botany*. 24: 673 – 678.

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RNZIH Awards and Honours

The RNZIH runs a comprehensive system of awards and honours for both members and non-members. There is one major scholarship awarded annually, worth several thousand dollars. For detailed information on these please write to the RNZIH, P.O. Box 12, Lincoln University, Canterbury. The awards are briefly as follows :

Associate of Honour (AHRH)

Awarded to persons who have given distinguished service to horticulture in New Zealand. Only 60 people can hold the award at one time.

Fellow (FRH)

Awarded to members who have made a significant contribution to horticulture and the Institute.

Peter Skellerup Plant Conservation Scholarship

A scholarship granted for research, field work, publication, propagation and/or cultivation of plants and any other activity likely to promote and assist the conservation of New Zealand's indigenous and exotic plant genetic resources. Up to \$5,000 is available each year.

Sir Victor Davies Award

Awarded annually to a young person who has demonstrated an outstanding plant knowledge. The recipient receives a certificate plus monetary prize.

Plant Raisers' Award

Awarded to an individual or organisation who has raised in New Zealand a cultivar(s) of outstanding merit.

Ronald Flook Award

Awarded by the New Zealand Arboricultural Association to a person who has contributed to the advancement of arboriculture in New Zealand

Closing Dates: The closing date for these awards has been extended for this year. All nominations will close on **30 April**.

RNZIH Website (www.rnzih.org.nz)

Comments from the Webmaster

Murray Dawson

Members will by now be aware of our RNZIH website (www.rnzih.org.nz), and hopefully many of you have already visited it!

As the current webmaster, I have been maintaining our site on a voluntary basis. This work has briefly been mentioned in previous RNZIH newsletters, but you may like to know more about the background and development of our site, and where we hope to take it in the future.

Background

For the record, our website was launched in late 1999 by Keiren Simon (a Wellington software developer, specialising in databases and Internet development), with Andrew Maloy as the first webmaster. He, Ron Flook, and David Shillito (all of the National Executive) encouraged me to become involved in mid-2000. As a consequence, an entirely new site was uploaded on the 17 October 2000.

Why have an Internet site anyway?

Not everybody has ready access to a computer or even an interest in the Internet. It may involve a steep learning curve for those who have grown up without these facilities. However, the Internet is rapidly becoming an indispensable resource that more and more people rely on and enjoy. A presence on the World Wide Web allows our institute to:

- become more visible nationally and internationally
- strengthen links with other institutes and horticulturists
- showcase our activities
- maintain a repository of our activities and organise related information together in a dynamic way
- make horticultural information and databases widely accessible
- keep members informed
- attract new members

What is featured on our site?

The RNZIH site is divided into the following main sections: Home Page, Horticulture, a Notable Trees subsite, Institute News, Awards, Join RNZIH, and Links. In all, our site currently comprises 28 pages containing more than 120 images.

A Home Page is the introductory place where most people start navigating through a site. Accordingly, we begin with our mission statement “to encourage and improve horticulture in New Zealand by promoting the understanding, appreciation, conservation and use of plants”. Then we outline the major work of the RNZIH, provide contact and membership details, and summarise the main points of interest in our site. We also list recent additions to our site here, so that regular visitors can tell at a glance what is new.

The Horticulture Pages currently contain 11 plant articles and 34 book reviews extracted from the *New Zealand Garden Journal*.

Among the topics available online are articles on New Zealand native and alpine plants, tourism and horticulture, garden history, and sundials. “Web-notes” follow some articles, and these provide additional information and relevant links. We plan to reproduce more articles soon.

The Book News and Reviews section of the *New Zealand Garden Journal* has long been supported by Touchwood Books. So, for books that are reviewed on our site and available for sale at Touchwood Books, we provide direct links, usefully strengthening our relationship with their bookstore.

The Horticulture Pages also list RNZIH publications available for sale (International Register of *Hebe* Cultivars; Checklist of *Phormium* Cultivars; Flowers for Shows; History of the Loder Cup; People, Plants and Cultivation; and An Introduction to the Notable Trees of New Zealand), and other horticultural information (Poisonous Plants In New Zealand).

The Notable Trees subsite includes an introductory guide, examples of notable trees, and details of notable tree registration. It also links across to an interactive database of Notable Trees that allows the user to search and retrieve records for any of the 600 or so trees currently in the database. This is being developed by Keiren Simon in conjunction with Ron Flook.

Institute News is a section that reproduces the chairman’s comments and other items of interest from our newsletter. This allows previous and

present members to keep informed of the institute's activities.

The Awards Page lists opportunities and the benefits of becoming a member of the RNZIH, and the Join RNZIH page features an electronic application form.

Lastly, there is a compilation of links to Internet resources on horticulture, including botany and horticultural directories, New Zealand plants, botanic gardens, horticultural societies and institutes from Australia, the UK, and the USA. Some of these websites are outstanding, and I especially recommend:

- **The Garden Web** (<http://www.gardenweb.com>), which has an international focus and includes a Glossary of Botanical Terms, a Plant Name Dictionary, a Nomenclature Database, and much more.
- **The Internet Directory for Botany** (<http://www.botany.net/IDB/>), which also has an international focus, and contains about 4,000 botany and horticulture related links.
- **New Zealand Gardens Online** (<http://www.netlist.co.nz/Gardens/home.htm> or <http://gardens.co.nz/home.cfm>), which is my favourite "home grown" site (if you will excuse the pun). This excellent site includes Gardens to Visit, Feature Articles, The Rose Garden, Letters and Notices, Mail Order Nurseries, and numerous Garden Links.

Several sites have previously been recommended by members in this newsletter, and have been added to our Links Page. If anyone knows of interesting horticultural sites that I have overlooked, please contact me and I will consider them for inclusion. Please also report any bad or broken links (links that do not reach their intended destination) that you may find on our site. This is a problem with constantly changing sites on the Internet, and shows the value of including an update date on every page.

What goes on behind the scenes in designing and maintaining our site?

First and foremost, lots of time! I must confess that before my involvement with the RNZIH site, I had no previous experience creating webpages — it has certainly opened my eyes to a whole new world, and a new vocabulary!

I estimate that it takes perhaps two to five hours to prepare each horticultural article for the web (remember that they have already been published in the *New Zealand Garden Journal*). If an electronic version is not readily available, the text is scanned from the journals and converted into word processor format (using optical recognition software) and

proof-read. The images are also scanned, resized and manipulated for the web. Next, the text and images are pulled together and formatted using web-creation software. Finally, all links are checked for integrity and the files uploaded onto the remote site from my PC hard drive.

When redesigning our site, I made use of the RNZIH logo and the fern pattern (copied from the *New Zealand Garden Journal*) to "stamp" the corporate identity of our institute onto every page. I also took special care in developing an architecture that is (I hope) easy to navigate and one that will readily allow the site to grow.

Dynamic and informative sites (or in other words, those that constantly improve, grow, and have a high information content) gain repeat business. With the innumerable websites "out there", those with good presentation and an easy-to-navigate structure will encourage people to stay and explore them. These ideals provided the basis for redeveloping the RNZIH website.

"Netiquette" is a term that webmasters use for "net etiquette". Express permission should be sought for using contact and email addresses, and from any relevant webmasters to link with their sites. Of course, permission is also gained from authors to reproduce their horticultural articles on our site. So far, all those contacted have been really helpful and encouraging.

All too often, websites fail to mention the source of the information displayed. This creates an unfortunate situation where there is an ever-increasing mass of dead-end information (and some of dubious quality) that cannot be substantiated. Furthermore, this information is transitory in nature because many sites are "here today, gone tomorrow".

For articles and information appearing on the RNZIH website, we cite bibliographic details wherever possible (e.g., "Reproduced from the *New Zealand Garden Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 1997, pp. 1-10"). This should encourage researchers to seek out the original articles.

Too little information and the site is not worth visiting and (arguably) too much information may potentially compete with RNZIH publications. In reality, however, I consider the website complements rather than competes with publications of the Institute.

As a safeguard that ensures that the journal is not bypassed, I am delaying the full web versions of recent articles appearing in *The New Zealand Garden Journal*. In practice, this is not really an issue because so many previous articles are worthy of being placed on the web.

As a result, our site provides “a selection of articles and information” to entice people to delve more deeply into the RNZIH. I endeavour to keep selections of the Institute News up-to-date and changing, so that members and others interested can keep up with current events (e.g., conferences) of the Institute.

Once the site was redesigned, I submitted it to international “search engines” (e.g., AltaVista) and “directories” (these are listings by category, such as Yahoo). This was an important step that made the RNZIH site widely accessible throughout the world.

Since then, our site has really taken off. As the figure shows, “traffic” to our site has increased markedly since it was relaunched (on 17 October 2000). During the most recent month sampled (January 2001) there were a staggering 1287 sessions, with 78 sessions being the most on a given day. Admittedly, some of these sessions are simply automated cataloguing by the search engines, but many horticulturists visit our site from New Zealand and throughout the world. As webmaster, I access a statistics server that provides all these details.

Future Possibilities

It is amazing just what is possible through the Internet, and we have great scope for further developing our site. However, like anything, more ambitious projects require greater skills and resources to complete them. Within these constraints, I can see several future possibilities for development.

My immediate plans are to expand the selection of horticultural articles available online. In conjunction with this, it would be really worthwhile to create a comprehensive online bibliographic listing of the article titles published in the RNZIH journals.

Databases are powerful tools that can create webpages “on-the-fly”, which cater to specific user queries. In other words, databases usefully present information in a controlled (and if required limited) way. It would be timely to create web-accessible interfaces to existing databases and lists held or being developed by the RNZIH, for example:

- Searchable checklists of cultivars (*Hebe*, *Leptospermum*, and *Phormium*).
- Images and descriptions of New Zealand native plants.
- Database of New Zealand Gardens Online.

As previously mentioned, Keiren Simon is already developing an interactive database of Notable Trees, and users should also be able to submit new entries online.

Good horticultural examples of databases with a web interface are the RHS Plant Finder (<http://www.rhs.org.uk/rhsplantfinder/plantfinder.asp>) and its New Zealand counterpart (<http://www.infogarden.co.nz/>). These both provide plant and cultivar names and details of which nurseries supply what plants.

Botanical examples of database-driven webpages are the International Plant Names Index (IPNI) (<http://www.ipni.org/index.html>), the Missouri Botanical Garden TROPICOS Nomenclatural database (<http://mobot.mobot.org/W3T/Search/vast.html>) and Landcare Research’s New Zealand Plant Names Database (<http://nzflora.landcare.cri.nz/plantnames/>).

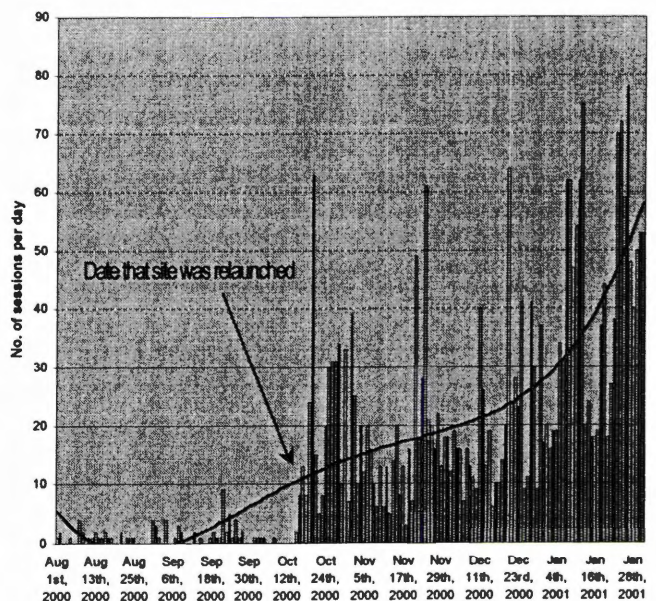
For strictly “in-house” information sharing, it is also possible to have password-protected areas of the RNZIH site available only to members.

Final Comments

As members of the RNZIH, this site belongs to you, so please make use of it!

Feel free to contribute in any way, and constructive comments are always welcome. If you feel the site could be improved or that something should be added, just let me know and I will do my best.

For example, it would be great to expand the web-based directory of members. If you are a current member and wish to be added to this directory, please email (dawsonm@landcare.cri.nz) or write to me c/o the National Office.



RNZIH Website sessions during the previous six months

What Sort of Fertiliser Does This Plant Need?

*From Property Care Industry Vol 1. No. 5
By John Mulholland author of "Maintaining Healthy Shrubs and Trees"*

Many gardeners feel very insecure when confronted with the decision of what kind of fertilisers (if any) they should use around a particular plant. Should they use 'chooky poo', artificial fertilisers, other animal manures or compost, and how much should they apply? Some advice can be obtained for local native species or for commercial crops, from the regional Department of Horticulture or local nursery. It is somewhat more difficult to obtain advice or to readily find literature that will indicate the amount and type of fertiliser that an individual exotic tree or shrub species requires, particularly ornamentals.

A method that I feel is reasonable and usually works for me in the scarcity of written information, is to try and relate to the natural conditions that would occur for the plant in its native habitat. For example, some Australian plants may be native to tropical areas that are subject to cyclonic conditions (warm, windy and wet) during certain times of the year, some come from arid areas that are relatively dry and hot, and others are native to the cooler temperate regions.

These differing and sometimes extreme conditions also prevail in other large countries such as Africa, India and the USA. The natural fertilisers available in each of the plant habitats for the native plants are quite different in quantity and type and need to be thought about.

Smaller countries such as New Zealand, the British Isles and Europe, while they may not experience the same degree of extreme contrast in the climatic conditions, nevertheless also contain wide variations of plant habitats. These range from low-mild temperate zones to harsh, cold alpine conditions. Each climatic zone will support a natural native plant population and also animal life that exploits it.

When one really starts to think about the fertiliser needs for, let's say, a mango tree (which originates from India/Asia), we certainly can relate to the fact that, while the climate and soil in which we may select to grow it may be similar to its natural habitat, the tree no longer has the same company of animals, birds and other wild life that would gather around and exploit it in its native environment. For example, in India there are wild elephants, monkeys, pigs,

cows and many more large animals that would gather around the tree at harvest time. In Australia, the largest wild life are emus and kangaroos and these do not tend to stay in one place for long, or in close company like herds of cattle. When a kangaroo leaves a deposit of dung, it is relatively small and spread out. When a herd of gluttonous, belching, elephants feast on the ripe mangoes in India, I am sure that these beasts leave really meaningful amounts of dung behind.

This would be true of the cattle, who would probably spend the night camped under the trees in large family groups. As for the wild pigs and monkeys... well ... it would be one hell of a party!

The point I am trying to make is that this would be an annual occurrence for the mango tree which would have evolved to cope with this and would probably miss it if it did not happen. This would also be true of other trees in these countries, where each tree would attract exploitation by a range of different animals.

These animals, as well as donating large quantities of manure, also die and return to the soil.

In countries and climatic regions with few large animals, plants would have had to cope without any large donations of manure and, generally, it is true that many plants from these locations resent the application of fertilisers.

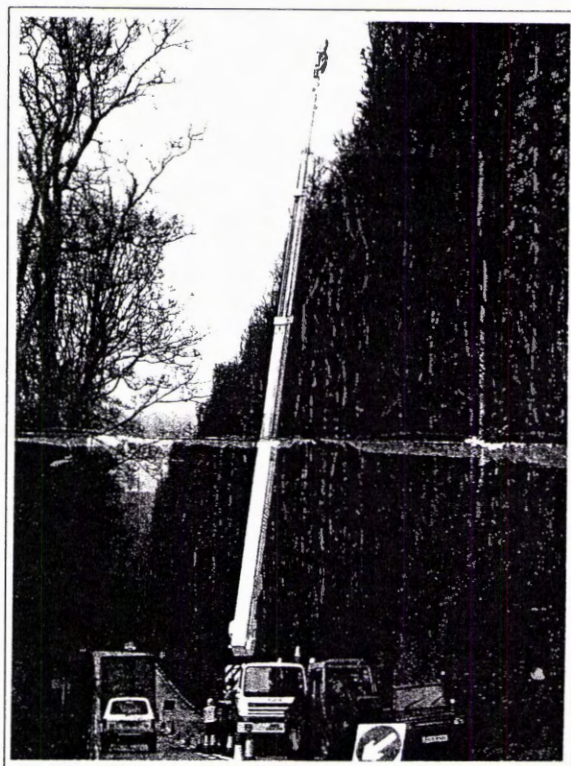
In desert conditions, the plants are small and often grow thorny, sparse foliage and would hardly attract the attention of, or support, many large animals. Most of the animals that are native to these arid areas are usually small and can manage on little extra water other than that which they obtain from their food. They would not leave significant amounts of dung (animal manure) and the few larger animals that do eke out a living are of the athletic type that often have to cover vast areas to gather sufficient nourishment.

In the less harsh landscapes, such as lush grassy plains and rain forests with the abundant sources of foliage and fruits, larger animals and birds have evolved to exploit it. Think about it!

The Unkindest Cut

Nathalie Curry

"The Independent" Sunday 11 February 2001



Gardening chores don't come bigger than this. The Meikleour Beech Hedge in Perthshire is the tallest hedge in the world. Ten miles east of Dunkeld, this series of huge beech trees snakes for a third of a mile along the side of the A93. At its highest point it measures 120ft. And this is the time of year when it needs to be cut.

Luckily, it only needs an all-over trim once a decade: a task that takes four men using a hydraulic platform six weeks. But even in "off" years the lower branches have to be cut – to a height of 15ft – so that people

can walk along the pavement below.

It's a tall order – and one that probably never crossed the mind of Robert Murray Nairne when he and his wife, Jean Mercer of Meikleour, planted it in 1745 to mark the boundary of their estate. He was killed shortly afterwards, fighting the English at Culloden. It's said that the hedge was allowed to grow to the heavens as a tribute to his memory.

The world has seen bigger hedges; notably the 1,500-mile hedge that the East India Company planted in northern India in the 19th century as a customs line, from the foothills of the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal, for the British Raj. But that – though 12ft thick, impenetrable, thorny and almost as long as the Great Wall of China – was only 14ft high. And, as Roy Moxham relates in his recent book, *The Great Hedge of India* (Constable £14.99), it succumbed to the onslaughts of white ants, grazing animals and fires in a mere 40 years. The Meikleour hedge, by contrast, "continues to grow and is healthy" after 250 years, according to the current Lady Robert Mercer Nairne, who administers the private Meikleour estate. It also attracts thousands of visitors a year (some of whom go on to see Britain's tallest tree, a 188ft Douglas Fir, at the Hermitage near Dunkeld); and, according to Lady Mercer Nairne, the hedge shows no sign of wilting yet. "No one knows what [the trees'] life expectancy is, as they have been planted in such a constricted area. We regularly lose large bits of the trees in storms, but normally the hole is filled in by the existing trees that spread across it."

There's just one shadow on the horizon: all over suburban Britain, Leylandii hedges are catching up.

Obituaries

It is with sorrow and regret that we announce the passing of the following valued members of the Institute:

Phil Gardner FRIH

Mary Mackenzie MBE, MA (Hons), Dip.Ed., ATCL, FRIH

Ronald Claris Gordon, DFC, DFM, AHRIH

Carl Ian McDowell FRIH

Opa, Northland

Wellington

Taihape

New Plymouth

Each one of these members has served the Institute faithfully over many years and will be greatly missed. The National Executive of the RNZIH extends condolences to their families.

More to a Shed Than a Mower

From The Times Weekend, Saturday 9 September 2000

When Gray Jolliffe shouts to his wife, "Just popping out to the shed, dear" she is never quite sure where to find him. For the celebrated cartoonist has taken the British male's obsession with his wooden den a bit far – and built five.

Jolliffe, the man who brought us *Wicked Willie* and *Jolly Giraffe*, is one of Britain's army of shed hermits. Lured from the comforts of house and spouse by the call of the wild, he loves to hide with his toys for hours at the bottom of his Oxfordshire rural garden.

He is not alone. The humble edifice, long derided as the refuge of sad chaps smoking roll-ups and perusing smutty magazines, is enjoying an image makeover. Its status as part of our cultural past is being recognised by a wave of heritage listing. It is also finding a new role as the tele-worker's friend.

Jolliffe's eccentric collection of sheds, with their odd features and gaudy colours, may thus be a sign of things to come. "I built the first one by levelling a big old brick dog kennel and putting up a wooden shed with a corrugated roof," he says. "It's called the Mission because I built a clock tower on top. It's quite a nice summer house and visitors can stay there.

Jolliffe, 63, next converted his garage into a shed which has become a workshop, office and general hideaway. "After that I built an 8ft by 6ft garden shed with a shingle roof. If you make your own you end up with a far better job than buying one from a garden centre, and for half the price, too."

"My wife, Niki has got into the Buddhist thing so I built her a meditation hut in gaudy colours. It's like the West Indies meets Tibet. After that I stuck together a hexagonal gazebo and joined them all with a walkway. My only slight worry is that some prod-nose from the council might make me tear them all down because I don't have planning permission or something."

Jolliffe has no shortage of room in his three-bedroom house. But, he says, "I tend to live in my office-shed. It's got everything I need in there: surfaces to draw on, a computer, stereo and TV set. It's my den, though I've been known to come out at mealtimes. Niki summons me with a referee's whistle."

The nation seems to share Jolliffe's enthusiasm. When the New Millennium Experience Company asked the public to nominate items that sum up this country, the garden shed scored high enough to be included among the exhibits at the Dome.

The company's Adam Liversage has his own theory: "The shed marks a rite of passage. You often find that for many men, buying and building a shed marks a point of commitment in their personal relationships – they have got to the point where they need some refuge in their lives from their partners and children. You can fill a shed with boy's toys that you can't keep openly around the house."

Meanwhile, more than 50 special sheds are being photographed and recorded as part of an English Heritage project, supported by a £3m Lottery fund grant.

Paul Wilton's piece of backyard history is a former shoe-maker's workshop, built around 150 years ago in the last great era of home-working, when craftworkers sewed together leather uppers for assembly at local factories. Wilton, 45 of Long Buckby, Northamptonshire, plans to convert the two-storey Grade II listed building into a workshop so that he can downshift from his day job as a communications engineer into his dream career as a stained-glass artist.

Other garden treasures set to be recorded by the English Heritage project include a stone-built 16th century former courthouse in Howden, Yorkshire; a 9ft square late 17th century thatched beer house in a cottage garden at Little Hadham, East Hertfordshire; a former black-smith's shop from the early 18th century at Allerdale and an old mausoleum near Wokingham.

Film fan John Jarvies has converted his garden shed into a nine-seater cinema called The Regal and screens classic movies at his home in Holt, Norfolk.

Shed makers are fast cottoning on to this new trend – and to the fact that while most of these structures add to a property's living space, they do not require planning permission so long as they loosely fit some sort of "shed" definition.

Laurence Llewellyn-Bowen, who achieved celebrity status on BBC1's *Changing Rooms*, works from home in a garden-office he had built behind his southeast London house 18 months ago.

Trendy sheds are the new spare rooms, he declares: "With the big change towards home working, a lot of people are very wisely thinking that they don't want to convert a room in their house into a study, so sheds have become part of a romanticised vision of Britain.

“We worked in the house for a while and it drives you made. Now we can sit and watch the seasons change.”

“I am a shed-dweller worker, but my shed is a bit on the glam side. It’s called a shed as far as the planners are concerned, but it cost me a good twelve grand,

with build-in circuitry for modems and faxes, and an alarm system. It’s also got a rather sexy neoclassical pediment.”

Sounds like a candidate for English Heritage listing. But perhaps not just yet.

INTERNATIONAL REGISTER OF HEBE CULTIVARS

PREPARED BY LAWRIE METCALF AHRIH

On behalf of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (Inc)

This major work, prepared over the past fifteen years will provide an invaluable reference for all those interested in growing Hebe as garden plants, as well as those involved in correct naming of cultivars. It contains

- Names and descriptions of nearly 800 Hebe cultivars, including synonyms, incorrect and invalid names,
- Major sections on the taxonomy of Hebe prepared by Professor Philip Garnock Jones and on the history of Hebe as a garden plant by Dr Peter Heenan,

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Medlars

From the RNZIH Auckland Branch Newsletter

The medlar is one of those fruits that one occasionally sees – but seldom sees eaten. *Mespilus germanica* is a member of the Rosaceae coming from the wetter, more temperate parts of western Europe. The tree is deciduous, flowering in early spring with an abundance of pure white flowers rather similar to those of quinces. The tree is very susceptible to fireblight and this is one good reason for not seeing it that often around Auckland. The fruit is like a very large, flattened rosehip up to 7cm in diameter, covered by brown russet and has prominent, persistent calyces. The fruit is best picked in autumn when it becomes soft to the touch and should be bletted, best achieved by placing the fruit in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

C.T. Kennedy in *California Rare Fruit Growers* March/April 1995 described this process graphically: “The medlar is to be eaten at a stage of *arrested* putrefaction ... softened, sagging, liquifacting fruit...” If you are brave, you can eat such bletted fruit although the texture is encouragingly described as “more of a paste, the consistency of warm chestnut puree or refried beans.” If that doesn’t put you off, the flesh can be scooped out of fruit and put through a sieve to remove the seeds and then used in various cakes or desserts. Connoisseurs praise the flavour but I suspect that there are many other fruit more worthy of cultivation.

Invasive weed information sources

Books

An illustrated guide to common weeds of NZ. Bruce Roy et al (1998). NZ Plant Protection Society

Internet

New Zealand

<http://www.boprc.govt.nz/www/green/weedindx.htm>

<http://www.hortnet.co.nz/publications/nzpps/>

<http://www.issg.org/index.html#Intro>

Australia

<http://farrer.csu.edu.au/ASGAP/weeds.html#dontgrow>

http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/technical_subjects/weeds.htm

<http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/progserv/plants/weeds/>

United States

http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/backyard_habitats/23607

<http://www.hear.org/>

<http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/>

<http://www.cnps.org/conservation/exotics.htm>

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/weeds/weedhome.html>

Others

<http://www-dwaf.pwv.gov.za/Projects/WFW/>

<http://members.tripod.co.uk/WoodyPlantEcology/invasive/index.html>

Organisations

DOC and local councils have lots of information

MAF has information on “Unwanted Organisms

I particularly recommend “Space Invaders”, from DOC

Melanie Newfield, DOC Feb 2001

Newsletter



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