

Newsletter



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Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (Inc.)

Chairman's Comments

Autumn is almost upon us, yet it seems spring is not that far back in the distant past. From a personal point of view the last few weeks has been a busy time, horticultural-wise. *Bromeliads 2003*, the recent conference of the New Zealand Bromeliad Society, was a major event for those of us interested in this huge family of plants. International speakers and visitors from South America, USA, Australia and the Pacific came together and shared knowledge of this huge family of plants. One speaker, Elton Leme from Brazil, drew our attention to the bigger picture, concerning plants in the wild and how some species are potentially becoming extinct even before they've been "discovered". In the last 25 years Elton Leme has personally described over 250 new species; and he's only interested in bromeliads! Goodness knows how many species of other plants are in these same areas waiting to be discovered, perhaps some with medicinal or commercial properties that could alleviate suffering or bring prosperity to those in need. Regrettably, in some areas, forest clearance for farming is destroying large areas before there's time to thoroughly study the plants there.

RNZIH conference 2003

Closer to home, plant diversity in our urban environment is the theme for the Institute conference this year, to be held in Christchurch from 22-24 October. The important role cities can play as repositories for biodiversity will be discussed, along with the need to focus on sustainable

development, triple bottom-line accounting, and the function of green environments in maintaining community health and cohesion. Recent reports by the Parliamentary Commission for the Environment and the Ministry of the Environment have drawn attention to these issues. The conference will be based on these and other themes, with an emphasis on practical outcomes. The topic is timely and already generating a lot of interest. Several keynote speakers, local and international, have been arranged. Full details appear on page 7 of this Newsletter, or you can check out the Institute website (www.rnzih.org.nz).

The RNZIH New Zealand Gardens Trust

This is the name finally settled on for our long-awaited garden registration scheme. A Board of Trustees has been appointed and the trust deed registered. Representing garden owners and managers the trustees are: Margaret Barker of Larnach Castle, Dunedin; Bryan Gould manager of Pukekura and Brooklands Parks, New Plymouth; Terry Hatch of Joy Plants, Pukekohe; Liz Morrow manager of Eden Garden, Epsom, Auckland. Jayson Kelly will be the RNZIH executive committee's representative and, as chair of the RNZIH, I also have a seat on the board. The board will meet soon and the real business of getting garden registrations and assessments up and running will follow. We owe a vote of thanks to all those who allowed themselves to be nominated and

congratulations to the above four successful candidates. Thank you all for your enthusiasm and support. The Gardens Trust has been a long time coming for the Institute, but now the structure is in place I'm confident it will grow to become a valuable source of information for those wishing to research gardens to visit as well as a valuable promotional tool for garden owners and managers.

Prestigious award

Congratulations to Alan Jellyman on being awarded the Royal Horticultural Society's Gold Veitch Memorial Medal in recognition of 38 years of work in public parks. Veitch medals, the only international awards made by the RHS, recognise those who have made significant contributions to the advancement of the science and practice of horticulture. An Associate of Honour of the RNZIH, Alan becomes only the fifth New Zealander to receive this award. He joins Sir Victor Davies (Duncan & Davies), John Goodwin (The Rhododendron Trust), Felix Jury (camellia and rhododendron breeding) and Lawrie Metcalf (work and writing on New Zealand native flora) in being so recognised. All the best Alan, for your trip to the UK in June to receive your medal.

All the best in your gardening endeavours.

Andrew Maloy
Chair RNZIH Executive Committee.



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EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT GARDENS BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK!

Botanists rely on floras, and apothecaries on herbals for the critical task of plant identification. Gardeners need practical advice as well as descriptions of plants—such as on the best times to sow seeds and graft trees, on the latest varieties, on bulb storage, and on tools and techniques.

A new exhibition called ‘**Cultivating Gardens: practical gardening advice through the ages**’, will begin on 21 March 2003 in the de Beer Gallery at Special Collections, Central Library, Otago University Library.

This exhibition will showcase books that offer such practical gardening advice. Some of the books are small enough to be true handbooks or manuals. Others, like the gardening dictionaries, are too massive to be taken into the garden and were undoubtedly destined for shelves in a gentleman’s library. The exhibition will not only trace the development of practical English gardening books from the late 16th century to the Victorian era, but will also follow developments in 19th and 20th century New Zealand, where new manuals were written for local conditions.

Items of particular note on display will be Philip Miller’s *The gardeners dictionary* [1731], John Evelyn’s classic *Sylva, or a discourse of forest-trees* (1664), Maria Jacson’s *Florist’s manual* (1816), and John Abercrombie’s *Every man his own gardener* (1797). Important New Zealand books borrowed from the Hocken Library will include George Chapman’s *Hand book to the farm and garden* (1862), early editions of Brett’s and Yates’ *Gardening Guides*, Michael Murphy’s *Handbook of gardening for New Zealand*, and Muriel Fisher’s *Gardening with New Zealand Plants, Shrubs and trees* (1970). Also displayed will be rare seed posters printed for the Dunedin firm Matheson and Roberts.

The exhibition will run through to 6 June 2003.

The curator for this exhibition will be Professor Helen Leach, a garden history expert.

Special Collections,

First Floor, Central Library

Otago University Library

Hours: Monday to Friday 8.30 to 5.00.

Publicity images can be supplied.

For any further enquiries please contact Donald Kerr, Special Collections Librarian, phone: (03)-479-8330; donald.kerr@library.otago.ac.nz or Professor Helen Leach, at helen.leach@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

NOTABLE TREES NZ

In a recent article in *Landscape NZ* Jan - Feb 2003 pp.21/23 'A Stitch in Time', many of the Big Trees of Christchurch are to be replaced over the next 10 to 15 years. Many of these trees were described as aged and ailing. A list of substitute trees suitable as replacements were given. The list described the proposed replacement trees but what was surprising was that all the replacement trees were under 8m. tall in maturity and in many cases after 30-40 years. Equally say an Oak of 30 - 40 years will have achieved similar stature but still be a long way from maturity before the aging process in maturity would begin.

This sends shivers down the spine.

Christchurch is known as the Garden City and trees are a major component of this description. Big Trees are the feature and the glory of the city. Is the future of the Garden City to be small trees and taller buildings?

The Big Trees of the city were planted in the middle of the 19th century and we now enjoy the sheer stature and dignity they provide. Their anticipated stature and longevity was the reason for planting. The endurance of these great street trees was known overseas. They were survivors of pollution, root disturbance and city mains plumbing. It is commendable that Christchurch have thoroughly analysed the condition of their

existing Big Trees and the causes of their decline.

Some questions arise as to the wisdom of the proposed replacement trees. These small hybrid trees are exotic varieties known for their colour and beauty and have been hybridised for their effect. It suggests that their longevity is uncertain. The article states

'However many of the old trees - planted from 1850 onwards - are reaching the end of their life span'. Can this be true when many of these exotics live to 800 years plus. eg. The Oaks of Hampton Court near London. Those trees have witnessed many changes in their environment but have been treasured and loved. Big trees are cities in their own right as air conditioners and as a habitat for many animals and organisms. We do not have

squirrels but is that a good reason not to plant Oaks or other statuesque trees?

NZ is noted for its superb growing conditions and our great native trees also bear witness to this fact. The argument that the Christchurch trees are aging and ailing falters at this point. Big trees are always a draw card for the shading of cars and public activities. This must result in compaction and other factors resulting in eventual damage to their health. It is fair to say this fact has been acknowledged in the Christchurch review of its valued tree asset.



It is suggested that the replacement programme has ignored the vulnerability of all trees. They should not simply be allowed to get sick without investigation into the cause of the sickness. Humans are given treatment and not allowed to develop further complications. Trees are equally organic and must be respected as living organisms. It may not be too late to provide remedies and protection by looking into the causes of the sickness rather than a demolition programme which speaks of a lack of respect and interest in the future of such Big Trees. The European and Japanese veneration of aged trees and their care would be a guide. They have a greater population and an equal need for safety and beauty. Arboricultural techniques to-day can offer salvation and restoration in many cases without recourse to removal as the cheap and easy option.

A timely replacement tree planting programme is applauded but can we not ensure that the substitute trees will do what the Big Trees have managed without much attention, to do so well for over 150 years and that is provide visual impact.

We do not have a licence to exterminate our forebears work but rather ask for two things first, a reconsideration of the present clinical approach and second, that Big Trees be saved Big Trees wherever possible. Many great trees have been voluntarily registered on the Notable Trees NZ Scheme. The whole purpose of NTNZ is to draw attention to the venerability of our great national heritage which no one, including local authorities own. Think of the implications of this example throughout NZ. It could end in to opportunism both public and private.

Ron Flook
National Convenor
Notable Trees NZ.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR HORTICULTURAL SCIENCE

The International Cultivar Registration Authority recently reappointed the Institute as the authority for *Coprosma*, *Hebe*, *Phormium*, *Pittosporum* and *Leptospermum*.

The reappointment is subject to the usual 4-year review by the Commission.

Lawrie Metcalf has again been asked, and has accepted on our behalf, the role as the Institute's International Registrar by the Commission for Nomenclature and Cultivar Registration.

Lawrie took on this responsibility in 1958 and the first publication was the Check List of *Leptospermum* Cultivars in 1963. In 1991 Peter Heenan prepared the Check List of *Phormium* cultivars. The mammoth International Register of *Hebe* cultivars was produced by Lawrie in 2001. Currently he is at the beginning of the work on the International Register for *Pittosporum* and *Coprosma*. A difficulty here is that some producers of cultivars are reluctant to register their cultivars. The International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS) is now suggesting that publications be entitled Registers and Check Lists.

Dr: Alan Leslie at the RHS. Gardens at Wisl y is Lawrie's contact within the ISHS for the updating of records and reviewing progress.

On behalf of the Institute I would like to acknowledge the contribution that Lawrie has made, and continues to make, in the intricate and time consuming work of seeking and recording the information that is required for the compilation of the registers of the five native plant genera.

With seven authoritative books now to his credit one wonders how he achieves so much when the work is so painstaking.

John Taylor
President.

NEW OLEARIA SPECIES FOUND 20KM FROM CHRISTCHURCH

A new species of *Olearia* has been discovered by Landcare Research scientists, Dr Brian Molloy and Dr Peter Keenan, and remarkably one of the sites, on the Waimakariri River flood plain, is only 20km from the centre of Christchurch. The other is on the braided river bed of the Rakaia River.

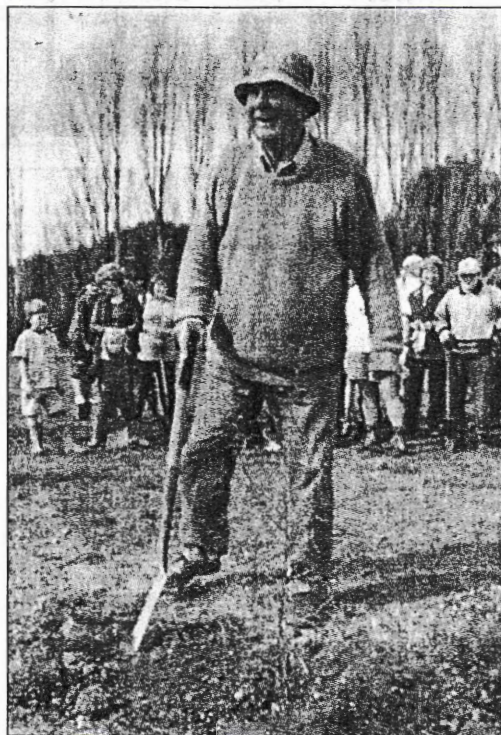
Dr Molloy says the new species occurs only on a specific soil type within the river systems and because there are less than 50 plants in the wild it ranks as one of New Zealand's rarest natives.

Hares, and possibly rabbits, had severely browsed the majority of the plants, although at the Rakaia River site they are protected by matagouri bushes, he says. This new species was incorrectly identified as *Olearia odorata*, the scented musk daisy, which occurs in dry and mountainous areas of Otago, Canterbury, and Marlborough but it is a smaller and multiple branched shrub with a different flower and leaf characteristics.

Both scientists recognised it was a new species of *Olearia* when they were examining herbarium specimens collected from the Rakaia and Waimakariri riverbeds by Dr Molloy during the 1970s.

Dr Heenan said the foresight of Brian Molloy in making the original collections, and their being permanently stored in the Allan Herbarium of Landcare Research (Lincoln), was a significant factor in its discovery, as it is very rare in the wild and not easily found.

This article was reproduced from the February 2003 issue of Commercial Horticulture



Dr Eric Godley plants the first tree in the kowhai grove at the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve, which is to be named in his honour.

Trees planted to honour botanist

The sustained contribution of Dr Eric Godley towards research into native New Zealand plants was recognised recently.

Recognition came in the form of a small planting of kowhai trees at the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve.

As former head of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research botany division for 22 years, the division expanded greatly to become New Zealand's principal centre for research on native and naturalised flora.

Respect by fellow scientists for Dr Godley's specialised research into the kowhai recently led them to name a previously unknown species, *Sophora godleyi*, in his honour.

Already there are plans to extend the kowhai plantings and to incorporate educational information about Dr Godley's work in an area of the reserve quickly becoming known locally as "The Godley Kowhai Grove".

CONFERENCE ON URBAN BIODIVERSITY

22-24 October 2003 Greening the City: Bringing Biodiversity Back into the Urban Environment.

Conference of the Royal NZ Institute of Horticulture (in association with the CCC, ECan, Landcare Research and PGG).

Held at Chateau on the Park, Christchurch.

The important role of cities as a repository for biodiversity is increasingly recognised within New Zealand and overseas, along with the need to focus on sustainable development, triple bottom-line accounting, and the function of green environments in maintaining community health and cohesion. In New Zealand, recent reports by the Parliamentary Commission for the Environment and the Ministry of the Environment have drawn attention to these issues. The conference will be based on these and other themes, with an emphasis on practical outcomes.

The conference will be held in the Garden City of Christchurch, where there is much collective expertise on urban biodiversity. Complementing our local experts will be several world authorities on the Greening of Cities, Landscape Architecture, and Town Planning to act as keynote speakers.

These topics are very timely as the Christchurch City Council puts into place its Biodiversity Strategies.

Keynote speakers include:

- Dr Morgan Williams, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Wellington, New Zealand
- Professor Chris Bains, one of the UK's leading environmental campaigners, and an award-winning author and broadcaster
- Mason Tan, Landscape Architect and Director of Mace Studio, Singapore

Who will attend?

- Local and Regional Councillors
- Town Planners
- Landscape and Building Architects
- Horticulturists
- Educationalists
- Researchers
- Conservation Groups
- Others interested in Urban Biodiversity

For more information see <http://www.rnzih.org.nz/pages/conference2003.htm> or contact d&camoyle@xtra.co.nz

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