

# Book Reviews

## The most magnificent family of trees that ever lived.

### Araucariaceae

Proceedings of the 2002 Araucariaceae Symposium, *Araucaria-Agathis-Wollemia*, 14–17 March 2002, Auckland, New Zealand

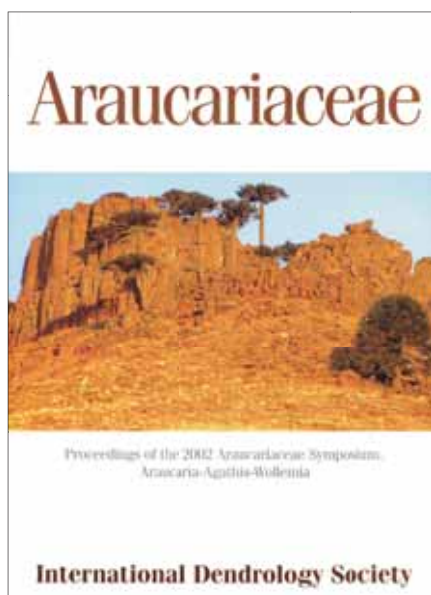
Edited by R.L. Bieleski and M.D. Wilcox

Published by International Dendrology Society, Larnach Castle, Dunedin, New Zealand, 2009

Paperback, 546 pages, 297 x 209 mm  
ISBN 978-0-473-15226-0

\$NZ200

Reviewed by Ross Ferguson



This volume contains most of the papers presented at the symposium held in Auckland in 2002. Contributors and the editors alike must have been extraordinarily frustrated by the delays in publication so it is really pleasing to note that most contributions have not been outdated but are still very relevant and useful. Indeed, this volume brings together much information on the Araucariaceae that is simply not available anywhere else. The organisers of the symposium are to be congratulated for getting speakers on so many different aspects: fossils, botany, reproductive biology, and horticulture and forestry. Equally important, the Araucariaceae from different parts of the Southern Hemisphere, Malesia, Australia, Oceania, New Zealand, and South America are all discussed. There are 74 papers and reports of which 15 are published only as abstracts. There is a list of attendees but no index.

Not all of us would necessarily agree with the organisers that the Araucariaceae are “the most magnificent trees that ever lived” but none would doubt that these trees are certainly outstanding. A full-grown, mature kauri (*Agathis australis*) is impressive: its size and its age will humble most onlookers. An avenue of Norfolk Island pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*) leaves many similar avenues in Europe looking somewhat tame. Even an immature Wollemi pine (*Wollemia nobilis*) has a remarkable presence. Associating the Wollemi pine in the public mind with dinosaurs was a brilliant public relations move, but this is a plant that stands out on its own merit.

Readers of the *New Zealand Garden Journal* may well find the papers dealing with the amenity uses of the Araucariaceae particularly interesting. In New Zealand, especially in the northern parts, our kauri has a special place in the landscape and its timbers were used in increasingly appreciated houses and furniture of the colonial period. However, its very size and its longevity mean that the kauri is often less suitable for growing in the urban environment. Many of the kauri planted are attractive trees, but they are still just babies and will take several hundred years to start approaching mature size. Some of the other araucarias have become more important as components of our planted landscape. Norfolk Island pines, in particular, give a special character to sea-side towns such as Mt Maunganui and Napier. Mature Norfolk pines in Auckland provide much needed vertical accents to the landscape. The paper by Clive Higgin is essentially a gazetteer of some of the splendid araucarias that are in cultivation around New Zealand. It is worth having a copy of this paper and the excellent conspectus of the family Araucariaceae by Mike Wilcox in the glovebox of the car as these will make visits to older planted landscapes that much more interesting. Sadly, many of the long-established plants described by Higgin are mature or are showing signs of aging. In my own suburb of Mt Albert, Auckland, the Seven Sisters, possibly the best grouping of Norfolk Island pines

anywhere in the country, are probably past their best with one having lost its top. Much worse, a lovely young *Araucaria columnaris* (Cook pine) listed as being in Mt Albert Road has suddenly disappeared without trace. As Higgin writes sadly about another loss, “Farewell beautiful tree!”

Most suburban gardens are too small to provide adequate space for araucarias long term. We must rely on plantings in public spaces. It was encouraging therefore to read the paper of Alistair Watt on the successful use of araucarias in many parts of Victoria, Australia. However, according to landscape architect Richard Hart, choosing a tree for public planting has to take into account important criteria that would not necessarily be considered by a dendrologist. If we complain that many public plantings are boring, then it is worth reading his paper to see why so few trees meet the criteria required. Fortunately, araucarias do meet many of the requirements. The paper by Phillip Thomas on the araucarias in the United Kingdom, mainly the monkey puzzle (*Araucaria araucana*), is likewise very interesting. *Araucariaceae* is an important book. It should be in all botanical libraries and main public libraries. It provides much useful information and should be read in detail as it will enhance our appreciation and our enjoyment of our heritage of great trees.

**Available from Touchwood Books**

## Fabulous Food from Every Small Garden

By Mary Horsfall

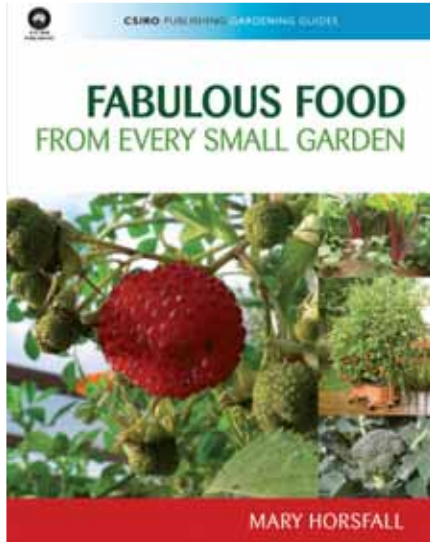
Published by CSIRO Publishing, Australia, 2009

Paperback, 232 pages

ISBN 9780643095977

NZ\$44.94

Reviewed by Andrew Maloy



Another in the series of Gardening Guides from CSIRO Publishing, *Fabulous Food from Every Small Garden* follows on from Mary Horsfall's earlier book *Creating Your Eco-friendly Garden* (reviewed in the *New Zealand Garden Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1, June 2009: 31–32).

In *Fabulous Food from Every Small Garden* Horsfall provides detailed instructions showing how to grow food at home in even the smallest of spaces, suburban plot or apartment balcony. Like other CSIRO books it is written from an Australian perspective, yet the vast majority of the plants, principles and practices described in it are equally applicable to New Zealand gardens.

The book is divided into two main parts. Part One, *All about the garden*, discusses reasons and motivations for growing your own food, including economics, freshness, nutrition and health, freedom from chemicals, reducing your ecological footprint and other timely and topical reasons.

Chapters in Part One (130 pages) cover, among other subjects, growing edibles (including flowers), the importance of diversity, high productivity from small spaces, various growing methods (including hydroponics, no-dig raised beds and square foot gardening) and growing edibles indoors. There are comprehensive, yet thoroughly

practical chapters, on creating and maintaining good soil condition, and composting; making the most of your space with design ideas and crop rotation recommendations; seeds (hybrid and open-pollinated), seed raising, seed saving; plant care, weeds, water and pests.

Part Two is *All about the plants*, with detailed instructions how to grow a range of edible plants in an A-Z format under the four headings Vegetables, Fruits, Bush Foods and Herbs & Flowers. Seventeen vegetables are covered from Asian greens to tomatoes – some of the cultivars mentioned are not common in New Zealand but the growing principles described are just as relevant here. Of the fruits a few, like babaco, banana, black sapote and pawpaw are not so widely grown here but the main ones grown in New Zealand are described, along with some relative newcomers that are of interest here like goji berry (*Lycium barbarum*) and acerola (*Malpighia glabra*). The six-page section on Bush Foods is specific to Australia but any keen plant person will still find it of interest and some of the plants described are grown here as ornamentals anyway, including lemon myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*), lemon scented tea-tree (*Leptospermum petersonii*) and lilly pilly (*Acmena* and *Syzygium* spp.). Herbs & Flowers covers 17 varieties, including most of the major culinary ones along with daylilies and nasturtiums, with notes on their use.

The final chapter, *A taste for all seasons*, has 12 recipes from what the author describes as her KISS school of cooking: “Keep It Simple Sweetheart”. I particularly liked the sound of the “So sweet pumpkin soup” and “Chock-full-of-goodness frittata”.

Horsfall combines technical detail with practical gardening experience and personal opinions based on her philosophies of self sufficiency and low impact gardening to make *Fabulous Food from Every Small Garden* an easy-to-read yet comprehensive book, of value to both first-time and experienced gardeners alike, and a book that should stand the test of time.

**Available from Manaaki Whenua Press**

## Natural History of Banks Peninsula

By Hugh Wilson

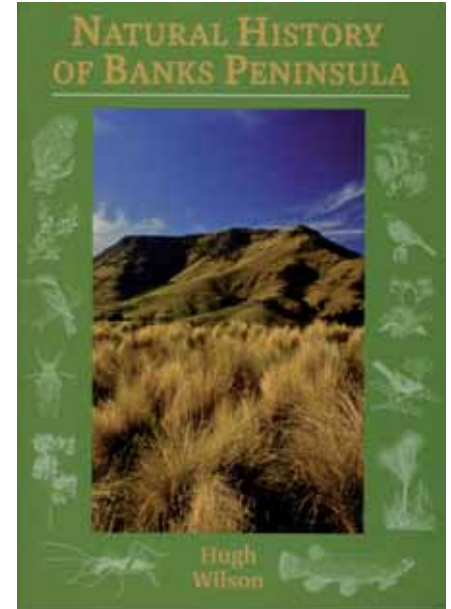
Published by Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2009

Paperback, 144 pages, 210 x 148mm

ISBN 978-1-877257-82-7

\$NZ30.00

Reviewed by Murray Dawson



*Natural History of Banks Peninsula* provides a concise but thorough overview of the flora and fauna, geology and ecology of Banks Peninsula, Canterbury.

Banks Peninsula is a unique volcanic landform that was an island for nearly all of its 20 million years of existence. Indeed, Captain Cook famously mistook it for an island on 16 February 1770 when he sailed past on the first voyage of the *Endeavour*; Cook named it after the botanist Joseph Banks.

As the title suggests, this book traces the natural history of Banks Peninsula including the impact of two human colonisations; Māori and Pākehā. As a result of these colonisations the Peninsula has undergone extensive changes. Most of its forest cover was lost through logging and burning and about 1% of the original forests have survived. However, in the last 100 years areas have begun to regenerate with some 15% now under some form of native woody vegetation cover.

The author, Hugh Wilson, is a renowned conservationist and botanist. He received the Loder Cup for plant conservation and the Allan Mere Award to honour outstanding botanists. These accolades only hint at the depths of his conservational passion. He has never owned a



car which he regards as “fossil fuel burning monstrosities” and his sole means of transport are provided by his two legs and a bicycle. Hugh was an early advocate of the use of gorse as a nurse plant to support native plant regeneration. At the time this notion was heavily challenged by the traditional farming community but is now widely accepted.

For the past 30 years Hugh's life has become an inextricable part of Banks Peninsula and he is uniquely qualified to write this book. Hugh lives and works as reserve manager at Hinewai, east of Akaroa, a privately-owned and funded nature reserve freely open to the public. Managing this reserve is very demanding and I am amazed that he still finds time and energy in the evenings to produce his scholarly works.

*Natural History of Banks Peninsula* is clearly presented and written in the same easy style as Hugh's earlier titles (e.g., Wilson and Galloway, 1993; Wilson, 1994; Wilson, 1996). He excels in achieving an ideal balance between comprehensible writing and presenting detailed technical information.

The text is accompanied by a good range of well-captioned photographs that convey a real sense of the landscape and biota of Banks Peninsula. These photos are provided by contributors and interspersed by Hugh's own delightful pen and ink drawings. There are also nine figures and seven tables throughout the main body of the book.

Chapters of the book follow a logical progression that includes Introduction, Geological history, Human history, History of the vegetation and fauna, Landscape and vegetation today, Distributional limits, Plant distribution by altitude, Ecological classes, Fauna, and Opportunities for protection.

Under 'Landscape and vegetation today', Hugh lists eight plants found only on Banks Peninsula: *Celmisia mackaui* (Akaroa daisy), *Festuca actae* (Banks Peninsula fescue), *Hebe strictissima* (Banks Peninsula hebe), *Heliohebe lavaudiana* (Banks Peninsula sun hebe), *Leptinella minor* (Banks Peninsula button daisy), *Myosotis australis* var. *lytteltonensis* (Lyttelton forget-me-not), an unnamed *Tmesipteris* (fern), and *Wahlenbergia akaroa* (Akaroa harebell, which is dubiously distinct).

The botanical names in the main body of this book follow Hugh's preferences, and those used are probably the most well-known. For example, not all botanists have adopted the change from *Hebe* back to *Veronica*, and a similar situation exists for three native *Corybas* orchids also known under names in *Nematoceras*. I am not qualified to comment on the scientific names of the fauna covered.

Six appendices provide checklists of species recorded on Banks Peninsula – native vascular plants (Appendix 1), fish (Appendix 2), amphibians and reptiles (Appendix 3), birds (Appendix 4), mammals (Appendix 5), and in the final appendix, common and scientific names for all of these groups, with the addition of key insects and weeds, are listed.

This book concludes with References, Acknowledgements, information about the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust and Hugh Wilson, and an Index.

There are relatively few errors in this book; the most noticeable is on page 50, where some of the text for the caption to Table 1 appears to be missing, presumably as a glitch in the formatting.

The only other natural history books that I know of for defined areas within New Zealand are for southern New Zealand (Darby et al., 2003), Rangitoto Island (Wilcox, 2007), and Canterbury (Winterbourne et al., 2008). Hugh also wrote the text for the Banks Peninsula section of the lengthier (and considerably more expensive) *Natural History of Canterbury* (Winterbourne et al., 2008) and draws upon this and his earlier vegetation survey report (Wilson, 1992) for *Natural History of Banks Peninsula*.

Publication of this book was sponsored by the Josef Langer and Banks Peninsula Conservation Trusts. The Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust aims to promote conservation, biodiversity enhancement, and sustainable land management on the Peninsula, and their sponsorship of this book helps to meet these goals.

This book is an indispensable guide for Banks Peninsula and Christchurch residents, as well as those visiting this special region from further afield. It succeeds in providing a deeper appreciation of and interest in the area; it should also help landowners on Banks Peninsula manage the unique biodiversity and ecology on their properties.

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- Available from Touchwood Books and Manaaki Whenua Press**

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