

# *Fernglen Native Plant Gardens*

## *Summer Newsletter 2014-2015*



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## 2. Summer at Fernglen – Curator report December 2014 *Malcolm Fisher*

It has been a favourable spring with ample rain and cool temperatures, reducing the need for watering. The pests which build up in spring have been in abeyance, and are only showing up now with warmer humid weather. So spring growth and flowering has gone well.

A forgotten *Clematis paniculata*, planted under the *Pomaderris hamiltonii* some years ago, reminded us that it is still present when it suddenly burst into flower. And not far away under *Metrosideros bartlettii*, *Clematis cunninghamii* showed up with lots of flower. In the last couple of weeks the above-mentioned *M. bartlettii*, a very rare rata tree from Te Pahi in the Far North, has also had quite a good display of white flowers. Another white flowering plant, which has been flowering really well for a couple of months this spring is *Olearia cheesmanii*. This daisy bush is near the Gazebo and there is another one on Ben's Ridge. *Dracophyllum strictum* has flowered well this year and underneath it the NZ Calceolaria (*Jovellana sinclairii*) is making a spectacular display with its white red-speckled flowers. Next to it is the ground-hugging *Jovellana repens* which, without any flowers, at first glance seems to bear little resemblance to its showy cousin. Also hugging the ground next door is the rare *Parahebe jovellanoidea*, hardly visible except for its dainty pink flowers.

Thank you to Barry for watering the Alpine House while I was away.

Thank you to Nev for his assistance with a Massey University visit resulting in the following, *Please say a very big **THANK YOU to Neville** for taking the 'Flora' group through Fern Glen Gardens this year - again. It was a fabulous visit and the students appreciated it very much.*  
*Gabi Schmidt-Adam*

Thanks to Rosemary and Nev for helping with the bus load of members of Friends of the Botanic Gardens. The thank you message from the organiser indicates this visit went really well.

*I'd like to thank you and your team on behalf of the Friends group for your warm welcome to Fern Glen on Saturday. It was wonderful to have knowledgeable guides to take us around, explain the development of Fern Glen and to talk about the plants. The DVD was also a fascinating insight into how the development happened and to your mother's interest in and desire to conserve NZ's flora.*

*A number of the group commented later that they were expecting overseas guests over the summer and that Fern Glen would be high on the list of places to visit with them - a comment from one - "I've lived in Auckland all my life - why didn't I know about this gem"!*

*So.... thank you again - a very successful and enjoyable part of our day.*

*Regards Liz Powell for Friends of the Botanic Gardens.*

Recently about 20 children from Verran School enviro- group came to record bird sightings and look at Fernglen's collection of rat-baiting stations. David Roberts, of Chatswood Reserve Committee lent me the latest type of baiting station so I could show the children. David coordinates a rat-bait volunteer group in Chatswood Reserve.

## 2. A successful working bee at Fernglen

Thanks to friends family and supporters for their hard work on a glorious spring day on the 11<sup>th</sup> October. Barry and his staff from the Auckland Council, Kari Street Nursery, made an enormous impression on the encroaching undergrowth at Ben's Ridge. They cleared around established trees and created space for new plantings. Helen with her calligraphic skills labelled the majority of plants on Ben's Ridge, whilst her husband Dave cleared the grass and weeds in this area. Our regular volunteer Irma cleaned all of the Fernglen signs, and then demonstrated her gardening skills at the entrance. David Bland, another local and enthusiastic Fernglen supporter, managed to be everywhere, and got through a ton of work. My landscape assistant Nick, son-in-law Peter and grandson Joseph attended to the paths. Fellow committee member Steve and his daughter Maarie pruned and weeded the older garden around Muriel's house. This amazingly productive day compliments the ongoing efforts of curator Malcolm and the council.

We would like to encourage all friends and supporters of Fernglen to come to our next working bee which will be held in autumn.



## 3. Visit from eminent South Island Botanist Hugh Wilson



Hugh Wilson Akaroa 2011-Wikipedia

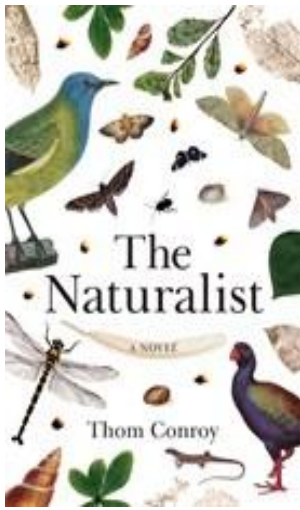
It was both a privilege and pleasure to finally meet and escort Hugh Wilson around Fernglen in October and share his knowledge and humour. This remarkable man is the driving force and manager of Hinewai on the Banks Peninsula.

A prolific author of botanical publications which include: Wildflowers of New Zealand (1974), Vegetation of Mount Cook National Park (1970), Field Guide: Stewart Island Plants (1982), Small-leaved shrubs of New Zealand (1993), Hinewai : the journal of a New Zealand naturalist, Natural History of Banks Peninsula (2009), and recently, Plant Life on Banks Peninsula (2013).

Our plant collection viewed through the eyes of a botanist of Hugh's calibre, affirms what we are trying to achieve at Fernglen . Hugh was particularly taken by the proliferation of "tropical"

natives. These are quite different to the South Island plants that he is familiar with. He particularly noted the specimens of *Pennantia baylisiana* and *Elingamita johnsonii* thriving at Fernglen which is far from their Three Kings origin. It is timely to be reminded of the value and importance of our work in maintaining an extensive collection of native plants, and in particular the aim to conserve endangered species. Although reluctant to leave his beloved South Island, Hugh is always assured a warm welcome at Fernglen.

The bi-annual newsletter 'Pipipi' is available from Hinewai, which owned by the Maurice White Native Forest Trust. The reserve is dependent upon donations for ongoing maintenance which can be made to Hinewai Reserve, RD3 Akaroa, 7583.



#### **4. Book Review: “The Naturalist” by Thom Conroy**

This may be the first novel reviewed in our newsletter. Based on the life of early botanist Dr Ernst Dieffenbach this is a creditable narrative device of fiction to depict real-world events. Dieffenbach had a very turbulent life. The idealistic son of a theologian he was a student revolutionary. Hunted, imprisoned, and exiled, first from Giessen, then Strasbourg, and finally in Zurich. After a duel over a lady’s honour, he was banished for 100 years and fled to London. In 1839 Dieffenbach applied for the position of naturalist, surgeon, and surveyor for a New Zealand Company expedition organised in London by William Wakefield. Conroy portrays

Dieffenbach as an early 19th century polymath, turning his intellect to any scientific discipline. The 28 year old was to provide medical care for the passengers on the ship (Tory) as well as a range of scientific observations from soil sampling to ethnology. Acquainted with other scientists of the day, it may actually have been Darwin who encouraged him to take a position with the New Zealand Company.

Dieffenbach travelled and wrote extensively throughout the colony including three months in the Chatham Islands and ascending Mount Egmont. He fell in love with the flora, fauna, and indigenous people of New Zealand. As an employee of the New Zealand Company, Dieffenbach essentially provided a scientific veneer for colonisation. His soil and geographical analysis was used for agricultural development. However, his idealism and relationships with the locals put him at odds with the company. Maori recognise that their earth is shifting, and Dieffenbach wonders whether the European presence will bring peace or subordination. "Can a new kind of colony be founded between two peoples so much at odds?" He had plans to create an early botanical garden, and was aware of the environmental impact of colonisation “each year the whale hunt brings in less oil, the fisheries provide a smaller catch and with every passing day, another forest is felled.”

When his two year contract with the New Zealand Company ended, he failed to convince the colonial office to establish a position of government naturalist. and was forced to pay for his own passage back to England in 1841. There he compiled a two volume record published in 1843 “Travels in New Zealand”. Covering ethnology, flora and fauna, Maori dictionary and grammar, his books frankly assessed the disadvantages, as well as the possibilities, of New Zealand as a field for colonisation. With remarkable insight he identified the 'ruling spirit of English colonization... absolute individuality' as at odds with the communal lifestyle and culture of the Maori. In recognising the deep spiritual attachment of the Maori to tribal land, and their need for guaranteed tenure, he probably did not endear himself to the New Zealand Company. This resulted in an unsuccessful attempt to return to New Zealand in 1846. However, after a revolution in 1848 he returned to his Prussian home town of Geissen, There he married, was later appointed supernumerary professor of geology, and finally died in his early 40’s of typhus.

The novel is divided into sections from different stages of his life and travels, and features Darwin, Charles Heaphy and Te Rauparaha. “The Naturalist” connects New Zealand's past with world history and brings alive the story of this remarkable man.

## 5. Significant Native Trees to visit this summer

### Northland

*Agathis australis* (kauri ) Tane Mahuta and Te Matua Ngahere at Waipoua Forest

*Agathis australis* (kauri ) Parry Park Warkworth

*Dacrydium cupressinum* (rimu) Grove Cottage Waimate North

*Phyllocladus trichomanoides* (tanekaha) Grove Cottage Waimate North

*Metrosiderus excelsa* (pohutukawa) Treaty House Waitangi believed to have been planted by William Busby around 1800

### Thames Valley Coromandel/Bay of Plenty

*Metrosiderus excelsa* (pohutukawa) Outstanding specimens on the Thames Coast Road from Thames to Wilsons Bay. Especially large specimens at Thorntons Bay and Waiomu

*Planchonella costata* (tawapou) Paeroa Domain

*Toronia toru* (toru) Paeroa Domain

*Vitex lucens* (puriri) Hikutaia Domain Opotiki. Estimated to be over 2000 years old

### East coast

*Metrosiderus excelsa* (pohutukawa) Te-Waha-o-Rerekohu ( the mouth of Rerekohu) in Te Araraoa. Possibly the largest pohutukawa in New Zealand with 22 main branches

### Taranaki Wanganui

*Dysoxylum spectabile* (kohekohe) Broadland Park New Plymouth part of a large forest are behind Pukekura Park

*Metrosiderus robusta* (northern rata) Bushy Park near Wanganui The oldest northern rata in New Zealand . Note the substantial rimu near the Park entrance

*Vitex lucens* (puriri) Broadland Park new Plymouth estimated age of more than 2000 years. Also more than 20 other puriri with estimated age of over 1000 years.



*Toronia toru* Thanks Jeremy Rolfe NZPCN



*Vitex lucens* Thanks Wayne Bennett NZPCN

## 6. Cultivating *Brachyglottis huntii* at Fernglen



*Brachyglottis huntii*  
thanks Colin Miskelly & NZPCN

Many years ago there was a spectacular large shrub growing by the driveway to Muriel Fisher's driveway. Muriel identified this as *Brachyglottis huntii*, a plant she had a proud affinity with because her maiden name was Hunt. As with most *Brachyglottis* species the plant eventually died and subsequent efforts to re-cultivate it have been unsuccessful. This year Terry Hatch (from Joy Plants) donated several plants grown from Chatham Island seed. A strong specimen planted at Ben's Ridge appears to be in a suitable situation. If the plant fails over the summer, two seedlings are potted in large containers as a back-up for transplanting in the autumn.

Easily grown from fresh seed and semi-hardwood cuttings, they are prone to sudden collapse from such soil and water borne diseases as phytophthora, verticillium and fusarium wilt. It is best planted in a semi-shaded site, or moist deep peaty soil with a south-facing aspect. In ideal conditions it is fast growing, and will flower within 1-2 years from seed. A naturally short-lived species it is wise to maintain young stock for replacement. Native to the Chatham and Pitt Islands the plant was once reasonably common but due to habitat destruction from grazing, and trampling from domestic and feral animals it has become a threatened species. Of the *Asteraceae* family, they can be considered a large shrub or small tree. It grows up to 8m, and displays yellow flowers from November to February, which explains the common name 'The Chatham Island Christmas Tree'.

## 7. *Asplenium chathamense* thrives at Fernglen

Thanks again to the generosity of Terry Hatch at Joy Plants this rare fern, endemic to the Chatham Islands, is thriving near the entrance to the Fern House. It appears similar to *Asplenium bulbiferum* (hen and chicken fern). Planted in autumn, it has already more than doubled in size. It is of considerable interest to visitors. The natural habitat is among coastal rocks and scrub in the very open remnant forest of the Chatham Islands. Typically ground growing, it can also be observed as an epiphytic fern on fallen logs. The true test as with other Chatham Island natives is surviving the hot humid months of summer. Fingers Crossed!



*Asplenium chathamense*  
Thanks to photographer Peter de Lange NZPCN

## 8. Botanical walk through the Karangahake Gorge

A little over 90 minutes from Auckland are the spectacular walking tracks through the Karangahake Gorge. While a reasonable level of fitness is required, some very interesting native plants can be seen. It is worth noting that the area has been extensively modified over the past 120-130 years by the various mining activities centred in the Gorge. There are very few large native trees, and emerging native trees such as totara and rewarewa battle with pine and wattle for dominance. Close to the ground *Ulex europaeus* (gorse), *Tradescantia flumeinensis* (wandering jew), *Conyza albida* (fleabane), *Selaginella kraussiana* (African club moss), and *Digitalis purpurea* (foxglove) are colonising some areas successfully.



Fortunately in other areas are populations of interesting natives:

-*Hymenophyllum* or filmy ferns are found in abundance at the side of some tracks usually south facing moist banks



*Pittosporum huttonianum* Thanks to the late John Smith –Dodsworth NZPCN

- *Pittosporum huttonianum* seldom available in cultivation this very attractive *Pittosporum* has a limited distribution on Great Barrier Island and the Coromandel Peninsula. (Seeds in autumn!)

-*Asplenium oblongifolium* and *Microsorium pustulatum* Superb specimens growing here on the ground (terrestrial) as opposed to epiphytic on Ponga or fallen logs.

- *Geniostoma rupestre* var. *ligustrifolium* (hangehange) Extremely large leaved ferns are one of the predominant understory plants of the Gorge and similar to those growing in the Kauarenga Valley

-*Meliccytus ramiflorus* (large leaved mahoe) Not only very large leaved specimens but all unusually clean of leaf spotting.

- *Elatostema rugosum* (parataniwha) Large swathes of the native begonia in low lying wet areas.



*Elatostema rugosum* Thanks to the the late John Smith –Dodsworth NZPCN

Possibly the most interesting non- native plant on the walk is the *Osmunda regalis* (royal fern) This fern escaped from cultivation many years ago and has naturalised in a few parts of the North island especially in the Waikato . Only one clump was observed of approximately twenty specimens very near the Ohinimuri stream. Apparently the English fern was very fashionable in Victorian times. Plants were raided from the countryside to provide foliage for flower arrangement to the extent that the fern became an endangered species.

## 10. Revision of the naming of the native Kanuka

It has long been recognised that New Zealand population of *Kunzea* (which also populate Australia) is extremely variable. Previously written off as “scrub” kanuka was often indistinguishable from manuka. A fifteen year PhD review carried out by noted botanist Dr Peter de Lange has recently identified ten species endemic to New Zealand. Seven of these are newly identified. One species *Kunzea triregensis* is only endemic to the Three Kings Islands, one other *K. sinclairii* is endemic to the Great Barrier Island. *K. ericoides* is only found in the South Island. Of the other seven species; *K. amathicola*, *K. robusta*, *K. serotina*, occur in both North and South Island and *K. salterae*, *K. tenuicaulis*, *K. toelkenii* and *K. linearis* only in the North Island. The latest developments in knowledge about *Kunzea* may take a little longer to become commercially available and accurately identified in nurseries.

Publication of the monograph was sponsored by the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network and the paper is free to download at:

["A revision of the New Zealand \*Kunzea ericoides\* \(Myrtaceae\) complex" doi: 10.3897/phytokeys.40.7973. <http://phytokeys.pensoft.net/articles.php?id=1924>](https://doi.org/10.3897/phytokeys.40.7973)



*Kunzea ericoides* Thanks to Photographer Peter de Lange NZPCN