



FERNGLEN NATIVE PLANT GARDENS NEWSLETTER

Winter 2017



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1. Curator's Report Winter 2017

Some tracks turn into water courses in torrential rain, causing loss of the gravel surface. So drainage work has started on the vulnerable areas. A length of pipe, given to Fernglen 15 years ago by the late Eric Hobbs, who was an enthusiastic committee member in the early days, will be put to good use for this project. Also, the intention is to have a few open wooden-sided drains, (like the one on the track descending towards the old swimming pool), placed across the tracks to remove water that descends the tracks. The 6m of aggregate supplied by council is very useful and I have been topping up the tracks. We need to work out how to manage the track ascending Ben's Ridge which, without side slopes for drainage, becomes a long water course.

It is great to be employed in Fernglen again, after a seven-month "holiday", and catching up with weeding and pruning has been the main activity. The several Saturday working bees have been a huge help in this regard. Other work includes blood and bone top-dressing, and on-going rat baiting. I attended a City Parks health and safety meeting at the Domain headquarters in February. The staff of 20 or so were welcoming, and I could see they are enthusiastic about their work. I am pleased to be a subcontractor to this organisation. City Parks will help me with any work if I ask (although their involvement may reduce my hours). After the workshop I took the opportunity to visit the adjoining nursery complex and nearby fernery.

The owner of the house just below the bottom entrance asked me if the semi-dead hoheria that are on our side of the boundary could be cut down. I am happy to do that, but notice that ginger is growing on his side of the fence. Next time I see him I will mention ginger is a noxious weed, and will provide a bit of help and gel to remove them. Ginger seedlings regularly pop up in the bottom entrance planting.

I have been going through the plant list which is shown on the website. Unfortunately there are to be a lot more deletions than additions.

Verran Primary School has given a commemorative plaque to fit onto a rock which has been put in front of the Stephens Island kowhai. The school donated that kowhai after Muriel's death. A suitable rock has been placed on site. See the North Shore Times report pg 13 and 16 on 25th May for article and photographs on the ceremony with Verran Primary school representatives

On the attached link is an interview with Malcom at the gardens.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/national/92902022/Botanist-from-Aucklands-NorthShore-passes-on-love-of-natives-even-from-grave>

2. Fernglen History. A Nursery catalogue late 1970's

In her introduction to the nursery catalogue forty years ago Muriel Fisher wrote:

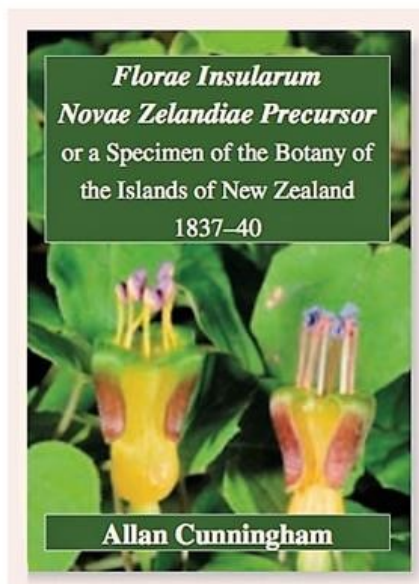
“With New Zealand plants there is a diversity of form and beauty of foliage which is unexcelled, and remember there is a New Zealand plant to suit every conceivable position. You are invited to view a fuller range of native plants on Fisher’s property, where a native plant museum and nursery has been established. It is in fact a botanical reserve with over 600 different species from all over the botanical regions growing here.”

The catalogue itself is a more a guide to native plants, rather than a list of available plants. Each plant has a detailed description of dimensions, *preference* for growing conditions, and any special features. Some of the more unusual plants, which are more difficult to obtain today than forty years ago, include: *Cordyline indivisa* - the mountain cabbage tree, *Dacrydium (Halocarpus) bidwilli* - the bog pine, *Dacrydium (Halocarpus) kirkii* - monoao, *Dracophyllum latifolium* - neinei, *Dracophyllum pyramidale (traversii)* - pineapple tree, *Earina autumnalis* - native orchid, *Nothofagus (Fuscospora) fusca* - red beech, *Nothofagus (Lophozonia) menziesii* - silver beech, *Phyllocladus alpinus* - Alpine toatoa. The prices were marked from \$1.90- \$2.50.

Muriel wrote that the whole aim of the nursery had been to grow native plants, particularly the lesser known ones, so that the home gardener was able to see for themselves what fascinating material there is in New Zealand flora. She concludes her guide to the catalogue with a quote from eminent botanist Leonard Cockayne:

“Will our descendants prize the unique heritage from the dim past and preserve these sanctuaries intact?”

3. Book Review *Florae Insularum Novae Zelandiae Precursor* by Alan Cunningham or a Specimen of the Botany of the Islands of New Zealand 1837-40 by Alan Cunningham



For the first time Cunningham's "Flora" previously published in 17 articles between 1837 and 1840, has been compiled by New Zealanders Peter Heenan, Bryan Molloy, and Jeremy Rolfe. These rarely seen articles were an important contribution to early New Zealand botanical discovery. For the first time they have been collated along with colour photos that depict many of the species described by, or named to honour Allan Cunningham. This re-print of his description of 639 species of vascular and non-vascular plants reflects a lifetime of plant collecting and studying botany.

Cunningham was the first resident botanist visiting New Zealand in 1826-



Allan Cunningham

1827, collecting plant specimens in the Bay of Islands area. He then travelled extensively in Australia collecting hundreds of plants, before returning to England in 1831. With his brother Richard, he was employed and resided at Kew Gardens, where he catalogued his collection. There he had access to the collections and references of other notable botanists such as Banks, Solander, Forster, Richard and Hooker. In 1837 he accepted the position of Colonial Botanist in New South Wales and Superintendent of the Sydney Botanic Gardens. He left England before refining the manuscript to his "Flora," and died of tuberculosis in 1839, before it's publication.

Despite the inevitable changes in plant nomenclature over time, this is a fascinating read. It includes many of the possible practical uses for native trees and the way the "natives" utilised vegetation. The illustrations and images archived at Kew are reprinted throughout this publication. It highlights his place in the history of New Zealand botany and can be purchased from the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network website.

4. Fernglen display at EcoFest Kaipatiki



EcoFest, is a month-long festival of events and activities with an environmental flavour. It has been run by the Kaipatiki Project and supported by Auckland Council for many years. This year Fernglen Gardens showcased at an event during EcoFest, and had an open day walk publicised in the event calendar. This was an opportunity to display and sell native plants, and promote Fernglen, which can be a more obscure gem in the North Shore outdoor attractions. The leaflets for the gardens were well received and should entice more visitors. The most popular item sold at the plant stall was the native c. Nev Arbury enjoyed the opportunity to share his extensive plant knowledge with an interested public. Few knew of the existence of the native hibiscus, the indigenous endangered native species *Hibiscus diversifolius*. The possibly native

Hibiscus trionum is known in botanical literature as "N.Z. diploid naturalised race".

The Fernglen committee would like to thank the Kaipatiki project for the coordination of this annual event and look forward to participating in future events.



Hibiscus trionum



Hibiscus diversifolius

Photos: Peter De Lange NZPCN

5. Waipahihi Botanical Reserve Taupo

To anyone who has visited these gardens repeatedly, since their inception in October 1966, it is clear that the years of endeavour has resulted in a stunning garden. This reserve is primarily run by volunteers who have moved rocks, formed paths, installed seating, instigated a pest eradication program and planted extensively. Volunteers continue to maintain the reserve with their weekly working bees. Taupo is rewarded with an immaculately presented attraction, displaying an array of native and exotic plants.

The reserve covers 35 hectares with numerous walking trails branching off the 2 km sealed loop road. It is home to over 2000 Rhododendrons Azaleas and Camellias, and so October and November are the best time to visit the flowering plants. For native plant lovers, care has been taken to preserve native trees, with specialist regenerative plantings including flax, hebe, rata, and kauri, now well established despite harsh winters. The gardens are particularly notable for fine Kowhai, which thrive in Taupo, and add to the vibrancy of spring. Take note of the



Taupo District council website

cleverly planted row of *Pittosporums*, near the water tower, that incorporate grafted native mistletoe *Peraxilla tetrapetala*. The plentiful birdlife and the spectacular views across the lake and mountains enhance the desirability of walking in this reserve that is both free, and open dawn to dusk all year.

Shepherd Road is an elevated site accessed on the South side of the water-front, just past the Napier-Taupo road turnoff.

6. Myrtle Rust

A potential disaster for some of our native trees, this windborne disease has blown over from Australia. There, it was first noted several years ago having originated in South America. *Uredo rangelii* a fungal pathogen is a member of the Guava rust or *Puccinia psidii* family. It was initially identified by vigilant nursery staff in early May on juvenile pohutukawa in post cyclone Northland. New Zealand biosecurity has been promoting an awareness of the potential for this disease for some time. Currently, it has also been reported in nurseries and gardens in Taranaki and Waikato. The likelihood that it is present unnoticed in the wild seems inevitable. It is known in Australia to affect the introduced pohutukawa, manuka, ramarama, rata, swamp maire, and feijoa all related to the *Myrtaceae* family. The ramifications for New Zealand are huge and include the impact on the Manuka honey industry and commercial feijoa growers, as well as on the iconic New Zealand Christmas tree.

Severe infestations of this microscopic fungus can kill affected plants and have long-term impacts on the regeneration of young plants and seedlings. It is not known yet how this disease will affect New Zealand species. Overseas, its impacts have varied widely. It generally attacks soft, new growth, including leaf surfaces, shoots, buds, flowers, and fruit. Symptoms to look out for on myrtle plants are: bright yellow powdery eruptions appearing on the underside of the leaf (young infection), bright yellow powdery eruptions on both sides of the leaf (mature infection), brown/grey rust pustules (older spores) on older lesions. Some leaves may become buckled or twisted and die.

If discovered do not touch. Photograph and Call the MPI Exotic Pest and Disease Hotline immediately on 0800 80 99 66.

It is recommended that all *Myrtaceae* planting should be suspended at this time.



7. Commemorative Plaque from Verran Primary School



Verran Primary School pupils Izabella Johnson, Sayla Hall, Tristan Sheehy, Suzie Clayworth, Ella Ava Sievert and Tyler Stevenson



Photos: Denise Piper/FAIRFAX NZ