

FERNGLEN NATIVE PLANT GARDENS NEWSLETTER

Spring 2019



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Our thoughts are with Fernglen curator Steve Cook and his family as they recently had the sad loss of Steve's sister followed shortly afterwards by the loss of his mother.

Attached are some of Steve's spring themed photographs taken at Fernglen.



Xeronema callistemon



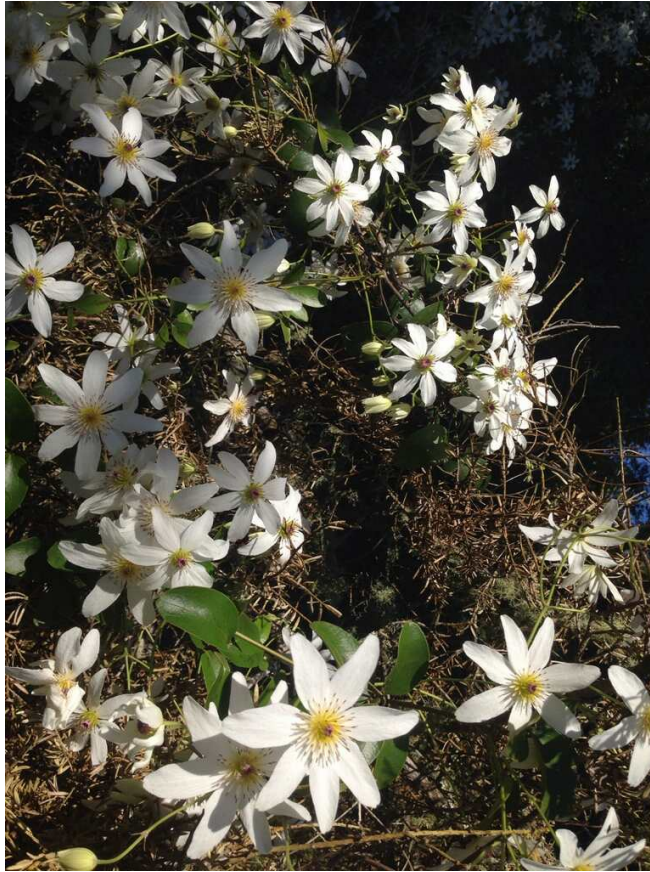
Carmine rata (*Metrosideros carminea*)



Rhabdothamnus solandri



Olearia cheesemanii flowering since August



Clematis paniculata



Kumarahou

News from Fernglen

by Kelly Hayward



It was lovely to hear chatter and laughter resonating through the bush from 19 'enviro kids' from Verran Primary School, Birkenhead. Visiting during conservation week, they came with the intent to make a difference in the gardens. Wasting no time, the children went to the area below the education room and demonstrated the old cliché 'many hands make light work' producing a decent pile of weeds. A favorite resting place for many, the bench seat at the top of the track leading to Ben's Ridge, overlooking the fallen rimu, has been relocated. Since the seat was too close to several kauri trees, the 'enviro kids' assisted Steve move it part of the way to its new location, along Canal Track, not far from the glow-worm bank.





The rain mostly held off during a KCC – Kiwi Conservation Club visit. The North Shore, junior branch of Forest and Bird is organized by the dedicated co-coordinators Sharon and Marilyn, who set up an interesting series of games like Fernglen Bingo and an ‘un-nature trail’ - a rubbish search, which I’m glad to say related to rubbish Sharon purposely planted in the garden, as opposed to rubbish left recklessly by visitors. Steve took families on a plant identification walk, and Sharon’s kawakawa brew was a refreshing way to finish the event.



Thanks to Fernglen committee member Mandy Osborne for arranging a full- day working bee with her co-workers at Auckland Council, assisting Steve with work at Ben's Ridge.



Auckland Council working bee

Construction company Naylor Love, www.naylorlove.co.nz through their community initiatives, have generously offered to assist Fernglen construct a ceiling in the education room. As a way of reducing waste they are saving off-cuts from their building sites and donating them to Fernglen. It is hoped the new 'rustic looking' ceiling will be installed before winter 2020.

You may have noticed three new shoe cleaning stations, each at an entrance in to the bush. These massive structures are just one measure in preventing the spread of kauri die-back disease. The stations are a vast improvement from the previous system of manually scrubbing and spraying shoes while hopping on the spot. Coming with already clean shoes is best, then following the instructions at the station will eliminate any fresh dirt.

A few weeks ago Pest Free Kaipatiki, in conjunction with Rotary and Fernglen cleared the area below the Fernglen education office, spreading 20 cubic metres of GAP 20 metal. This work is in preparation for a tool-shed which will be built by Rotary. Once completed Pest Free Kaipatiki will operate the shed as a facility where the public can access tools to aid in the fight against pest plants and animals.

Part of Pest Free Kaipatiki's latest work is creating halos around all ecological areas in Kaipatiki. "The halo concept is to surround valuable ecological areas with a protection zone made up of households that can intercept pest species and give our native species a great chance to prosper." Halo neighbours trapping and baiting on their property is particularly important being a 'mast year' and as Kauri Park and Muriel Fisher Reserve are closed, they have very limited, if any, pest control occurring.

If you would like to know more about halos in Kaipatiki, particularly around Kauri Park and Muriel Fisher Reserve, please contact:

Annie Dignan,
Kauri Dieback Campaign Coordinator
Pest Free Kaipātiki Restoration Society
09 394 9195
0212244786
annie.dignan@pestfreekaipatiki.org.nz

If you live on Kauri Road, Hebe Place, Waipa Street or Balmain Road and would like to be part of a halo and/or co-ordinate a halo around Fernglen Native Plant Gardens, please contact Kelly on kelly.haywardg@gmail.com

Thanks for your on-going support.

Tree planting on a large scale

by Neville Arbury

On Monday, July the 29th, 350,000,000 trees were planted in Ethiopia in one day, breaking the record of 150,000,000 trees planted in India in one day a few years ago. The planting is designed to reverse the effects of deforestation in this drought-prone country where only 4% of the original tree coverage remains. The planting was mainly carried out by locals with the help of some international groups. Civil servants throughout the country were given the day off in order to assist with planting.

The logistics of such a large scale planting are 'mind-boggling', not only to collect seed, grow the plants, identify areas to be planted, but to provide transport, tools, food and water for those taking part. Hopefully, a documentary has been made to share this remarkable achievement with the world. It certainly provides a challenge to many countries around the world that would benefit from similar large scale planting of trees. Hopefully, the rains arrived soon after planting to sustain the young trees.

Tracks open for tramping in the Waitakeres

by Neville Arbury

With the majority of tracks through the Waitakeres closed because of Kauri dieback, there is still a number of tracks that remain open either where there are no significant stands of Kauris or where tracks have been upgraded. Remember to thoroughly clean footwear before entering these tracks. The tracks listed below were registered as open as of October 2019, the list runs from North to South:

- Whatatiri, track off Bethells Rd.
- Lake Wainamu track
- Te Henga walkway
- Anawhata beach track
- Rose track
- Laird Thompson track
- Lion rock
- Byer's walk
- Kitekite Fall's walk
- Tasman lookout as Piha
- Mercer bay loop track
- Coman's track
- Pohutukawa glade walk at Karekare
- Track from the upper Huia reserve to the lower Huia dam reserve
- Spaggs's monument track at Huia
- Native trail at the Arataki visitor centre
- Slip track near the visitor's centre
- The Beverage track
- The Zig Zag track

For the latest track updates visit www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/protectkauri

A look at our native cicadas

by Neville Arbury

An intrinsic part of a New Zealand summer, in January/February as temperatures climb, so does the sound of massed cicadas, sometimes reaching over 100 decibels! We have in New Zealand between 40 and 50 native species, the figure is not exact as new species are still being discovered. The Maori name for the 'cicada chorus' is Kihikihi Wawa that translates to 'the cicada that roars like the sound of heavy rain'.

Cicadas are found from the coast to the mountains, they vary in size from the smallest with a wingspan of 29mm to the largest with a wingspan of 80mm. The sound we are all so familiar with is the male 'singing' to attract females. He achieves this by contracting muscles that control ribbed membranes on the base of their abdomens. Female cicadas locate the males by following the direction of the sound.

After mating, the female lays her eggs and the short 2-4 weeks of the adult cicada is over. The eggs hatch in Autumn, the nymphs fall to the ground and commence digging anywhere from 40cm to 1m deep. Here they remain for 3-15 years receiving nutrition by piercing plant roots with their mouthparts and sucking the sap. The exact time they stay underground is still unsure. Eventually, they burrow to the surface having shed their skin five times. Once free of the soil, the nymph has its final moult leaving behind the distinctive brown 'plastic' skin hat we all know so well. After drying their new skin they are now ready to fly and for the males to sing.

Book review - *Ajax, The Kea Dog* by Corey Mosen

by Neville Arbury



While not a book specifically directed towards native plants, this is a fascinating publication providing a heart-warming description of the relationship between Corey and his dog Ajax. The daunting training regime and the genius of this amazing canine are well documented. The parallel story is of the Kea, its habitat, breeding habits, incredible intelligence and sadly the declining numbers of our intriguing alpine parrot. I learned so much about Keas whilst reading this book, I cannot wait to travel to the South Island next year to hopefully observe them in the wild.

Here at Fernglen, there is a connection with Corey, the author of this book, his wife Sarah is granddaughter of Bill and Muriel Fisher and daughter of Malcolm Fisher, our curator for many years.

What I really loved about this book is that it could be read and enjoyed by a very wide age group. I would suggest from 12 to 100! I hope Ajax continues to play an important role in the family, the twins will no doubt love having an extra parent! Let's hope that the work of Corey and similarly dedicated guardians of our native fauna have success in ensuring the longevity of this remarkable bird.

An absolute must and an excellent Christmas present, a really easy read and well illustrated with numerous photographs of the redoubtable Ajax.

The Pokaka at Ben's Ridge finally emerging from its juvenile form

by Neville Arbury

The two Pokaka specimens, *Elaeocampus hookerianus*, planted on the same day in 2003, have in typical Pokaka fashion grown in quite individual ways, the prolonged juvenile form is normal for this tree. With a dense, multibranched, divaricating habit the two plants have attracted considerable attention from visitors over the year providing perfect examples of two of our distinct native plant characteristics, divarication and juvenility. The uppermost specimen now appears to be emerging from the juvenile form with a single stem 'reaching for the sky'. There is still no sign of the adult leaf form, quite dissimilar from the juvenile form, this will probably emerge during the coming growing season.

Eventually, the Pokaka will grow to 10-12 metres tall, the tree naturally occurs on both islands and also on Stuart Island. Flowers are similar to that of its close relative, the Hinau, *Elaeocampus dentatus*, that are growing in close proximity at Ben's Ridge. The flowers appear in clusters of white bell-shaped flowers with distinctive ragged-edged petals blooming from late spring to early summer. Purple olive-like fruit appear in Autumn. In a manner similar to a number of our native plants, especially coprosmas and pseudopanax species, where Hinau and Pokaka grow naturally in proximity, hybrids will appear. Check out our two fascinating Pokakas at your next visit to Fernglen, they are to be found at the top of Ben's Ridge just past the coprosma collection.

Manuka plants thriving in Vietnam

by Neville Arbury

On my annual trip, it was a real surprise to see excellent specimens of pink Manuka being offered for sale at a number of nurseries in the south of Vietnam at Dalat. This is a small city of around 120,000 people situated at around 1500 metres above sea level, the perfect cooler spot for the good citizens of Ho Chi Minh city to escape to when the weather is stifling hot!

It is also the horticultural centre of Vietnam where they can grow almost any fruit tree, vegetable crop and it is the main area for cut flowers. There is also a thriving nursery trade and here I found the very healthy young Manuka plants growing in our equivalent of a pb 8 planter bag. Interestingly they do not use potting mix as we know it when producing young plants, instead the plants are grown in what can be described as a very light sandy loam. Most of the plants I observed looked very healthy and the Manukas were covered in pink flowers.

If you happen to be travelling to Vietnam, Dalat is an absolute must, not only because it is considerably cooler than most cities, but it is a horticulturists dream. The Flower Gardens, a scaled-down botanic gardens are fascinating, immaculately groomed and full of botanical surprises. You can also visit coffee plantations, strawberry farms, cut flower glasshouses, orchard nurseries and tea plantations, the list is endless. The quality of the final products, be it fruit, vegetables or flowers are simply amazing.

What's happening at Fernglen?

Working bees

Regardless of the weather, working bees occur at Fernglen **on the second Saturday of every month from 9am onwards, until about 12 noon.**

The working bee is a great way to meet others, learn more about native plants, weeds and pest control. There is always a job to be done in the garden or in the education room.

No gardening experience is necessary and all ages and abilities are welcome. Gloves and gardening tools can be supplied.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Educational tours

Are you involved with a school or an education group and would like to learn about New Zealand native plants? A unique collection of plants from all over New Zealand grows at Fernglen. To see what is on offer please contact us

on email: fernglen.nz@gmail.com

or phone: 021 236 5800

Pest Free Kaipatiki

Did you know Pest Free Kaipatiki Restoration Society are located in the Fernglen education room office? Check out news about pest plants, kauri dieback prevention, pest animals and events at www.pestfreekaipatiki.org.nz

Room hire

The Fernglen Education Room is available for hire at very competitive rates. Please contact us

on email: fernglen.nz@gmail.com

or phone: 021 236 5800



Botanical Art at Fernglen

Interested?

contact
Lesley Alexander
021 161 7070 or
email lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com