FERNGLEN NATIVE PLANT GARDENS NEWSLETTER

Winter 2020

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News from Fernglen

by Kelly Hayward

I hope everyone is keeping well under level 2 or 3, depending on where you live.

Fernglen has had two working bees since the last lockdown ended in June. The 'unmissable' sign at the top of Kauri Road is attracting new volunteers, which is wonderful. Their contribution has enabled the planting of trees, weeding and tidying of tracks. At the completion of the working bees there's a welcome noise in the education room as new and regular volunteers chat over a well deserved cuppa.

Since Steve began work again in the gardens, they have slowly been restored to their pre-lock down state and, regular weekly volunteers like Ngaire, carrying out micro weeding, has the rock gardens looking loved once again.

One of Steve's photographs below demonstrates his work at reclaiming the footpath leading to Fernglen's main gate. The foliage had become so overgrown pedestrians were forced to walk on the road, despite numerous calls to the Council and AT over a prolonged period.

Under the latest restrictions, again, Steve is not to work at Fernglen and working bees are suspended until further notice. For everyone's benefit, fingers crossed the restrictions do finish on the 26th.

Construction company **Naylor Love** (www.naylorlove.co.nz) have generously offered to assist with materials and expertise in erecting a ceiling in the education room. It's fantastic that the majority of materials are left overs from Naylor Love's many commercial builds, which means less wastage and more sustainability. It has been a long held wish of the Fernglen committee to have a ceiling to assist in keeping the building warm and debris from regularly falling. The build will take place on Friday the **11th of September 2020** (depending on Covid) and, while Naylor Love have kindly offered to donate their expertise, we do need **community involvement**. If you, or anyone you know is able to **assist** on Friday the 11th of Sept, not necessarily doing ceiling work, but helping in some other way i.e. tidying up **please let me know** on 021 236 5800. All help is gratefully received.

Regardless of whether you are able to assist or not, if you are free on the day, please join us at 11am for a **bbq** courtesy of Naylor Love.

More plants in the lower rockery area now have plant labels thanks to **Metal Images** (www.metalimages.co.nz) and Dan Marrow at Auckland Council. The labels give visitors and volunteers an opportunity to become more familiar with the botanical, Maori and common names of these special plants which contribute to Fernglen's unique status as an open air native plant museum.

Puriri moth that hatched 3 months early, due to the unusual warm winter weather

Kaka visiting Fernglen frequently

Reclaiming the footpath next to Fernglen

Pittosporum rangitahua – A rarity from the Kermadec Islands

by Neville Arbury

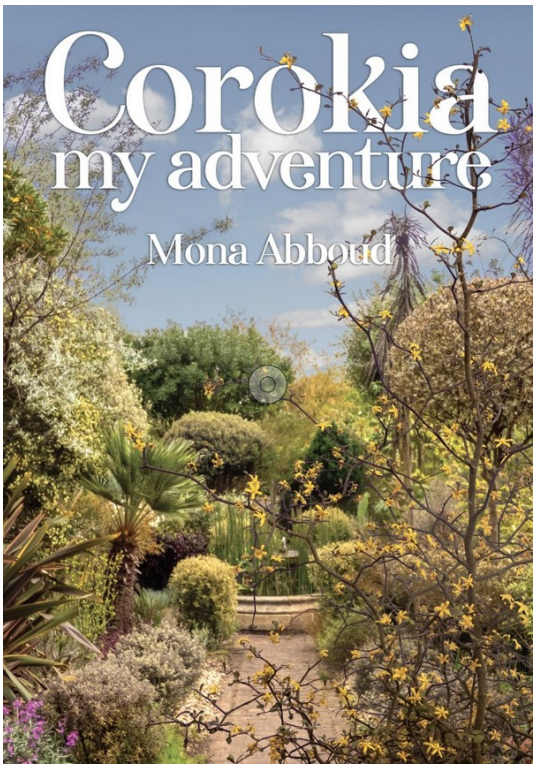
Pittosporum rangitahua – A 'rarity' from the Kermadec Islands. I am very fortunate to have a specimen of the recently named species, growing at my holiday home near the beach at Mangawhai Heads. I acquired the plant from Geoff Davidson's Oratia Native Nursery (now sadly closed) around 8-10 years ago.

This pittosporum is described as a small tree growing from 3-8 meters tall and is located on Raoul Island in the Kermadec group. It is similar in form to *Pittosporum crassifolium* and *Pittosporum fairchildii* with very distinct blue/gray coloured leaves and a very dry open habitat. The only other specimens I have seen recently are a group of mature trees at Terry Hatchs' amazing Joy Plants Nursery near Pukekohe. Strangely over Queen's Birthday weekend my small tree, now around 2.5 metres tall, was in full flower with very deep red coloured flowers.

There was an excellent specimen at Fernglen near the top of Ben's Ridge, however sadly a few years ago the plant died for reasons unknown. As my specimen is well removed from *Pittosporum crassifolium* and *fairchildii* growing on my property, I will endeavour to collect some seed next autumn and produce some young plants.

Book review – *Corokia, My Adventure* by Mona Abboud

by Neville Arbury



Can you believe it, a book solely devoted to our native corokias. Written by a woman of Lebanese extraction, who lives in London and who has a passion for our corokias! These are plants that are often overlooked and regularly incorrectly planted by many New Zealand plant lovers. Before reviewing this intriguing publication, it is worth pointing out that corokia is a small genus of three species: *Corokia buddleioides*, *Corokia cotoneaster* and *Corokia marcrocarpa*. *Corokia buddleioides* and *Corokia cotoneaster* readily hybridise and there are therefore numerous hybrids available both here and in the UK.

Mona Abboud, the author, admits to falling in love with corokias after being introduced to the form "Red Wonder" growing near the seaside in Suffolk. This led to what she describes as "the manifestation of my evangelism for this genus" and eventually to the acquisition of all fourty species and cultivars available in the UK, France and Holland. Many of the corokias available in the UK had been introduced by an intrepid plantsman Graham Hutchins, who visited New Zealand four times from 1977 to 1990 collecting more than a thousand native plants to take home.

One of the most interesting chapters is titled "The History of Corokia – From Cohabiting with Dinosaurs, through Maori Knowledge to Victorian Discovery." Korokio or *Corokia cotoneaster* was used by Maori to make fishhooks, in the making of fire, and boiled leaves were used in the treatment of stomach complaints including ulcers. The author, in considerable detail, outlines the contribution of early botanists who played an important role in discovering and naming our native flora, including Joseph Banks, Allan and Richard Cunningham, Joseph Hooker, William Colenso, Andrew Sinclair, William Hooker, Etienne Raoul, H. H. Travers, Thomas Kirk, Leonard Cockayne and T. F. Cheeseman.

I was surprised to read that corokias are hardy down to -8 °C. As the author enthuses, they provide structure and all year interest. They can be displayed as attractive specimen plants, used as a hedge, or planted in a mixed border. In true English fashion, she encourages the use of clipped corokias as a substitute for clipped box hedges.

In Mona Abboud's garden she cultivates her cherished corokias among her other favourite N.Z. native plants including coprosmas, cordylines, melicytus, muehlenbeckias, olearias, pittosporums, pseudopanax, sophoras and uncinias. Mona is a passionate advocate for her beloved corokias. Her enthusiasm and passion flow through every page of this fascinating publication. Highly recommended.

The classification of our native brooms

by Neville Arbury

Fortunately there are now only twenty-four species of native brooms, the 1980 publication "Trees and Shrubs of new Zealand" by Al Poole and illustrated by Nancy M. Adams, listed 49 species of carmichaelias, as well as separate chordospartiums, corallospartiums and notospartiums, all of which have now been consolidated into one genus carmichaelia.

There is one species native to Lord Howe Island, otherwise they are all endemic to New Zealand. Many carmichaelias have a limited distribution, nineteen species are listed as either at risk or threatened. This high percentage of endangered species is the outcome of poor seedling survival. Grazing animals and aggressive weed growth being major contributing factors.

Carmichaelias vary tremendously in from, from semi-prostrate shrubs up to 10 metre small trees. Intriguingly, *Carmichaelia kirkii* is described as a climber! There are numerous unusual features of this genus, in fact they are possibly the oddity of all our native plants! The adult form of the plant can be described as leafless, leaves on juvenile plants slowly become smaller and smaller as the plant grows and then disappear. What remains are called phylloclades that can be flat, erect and round.

A considerable number of carmichaelia species are found in the drier parts of the eastern South Island. Here the habitat is in open areas, riverbeds, and native grasslands. As carmichaelias have the ability to fix nitrogen, they can thrive in poor quality soils. Interestingly carmichaelias are predominantly pollinated by our native bees. An unnamed species, previously known as *Carmichaelia aligera* has thrived at Ben's Ridge for a number of years.

Assessing various native plants for revegetation planting in the Auckland Region

by Neville Arbury

As a landscaper passionate about native plants, I regularly undertake major revegetation plantings. With the trees and shrubs I planted in the winter of 2019, the following nine months have been a very trying time with a dry winter, followed by a dry spring, an especially dry summer and still no significant rain during the compulsory lockdown period.

Usually, with careful selection of suitable species, good planting technique and where possible mulching in the first summer, revegetation plantings are incredibly successful. However, this year has been a real challenge because of the drought conditions. Below are listed some of the trees and shrubs planted last July and how they performed.

Aristotelia serrata	Mainly struggled, would shed leaves and then grow new ones.
Coprosma areolata	One of my preferred revegetation plants, they have struggeled.
Coprosma crassifolia	A hardy survivor, have barely grown.
Coprosma lucida	A tough revegetation plant. All survived.
Coprosma macrocarpa	Survived but struggled.
Coprosma repens	Thrived!
Coprosma robusta	Appropriately named. Very hardy.
Hebe parviflora	Only hebe planted. Thrived.
Kunzea ericoides	Survived but struggled.
Melicytus obovatus	Survived but with little growth
Melicytus ramiflorus	Flourished.
Myrsine australis	Survived, but with little new growth.
Pittosporum crassifolium	Have grown significantly.
Pittosporum huttonianum	Flourished in some sites.
Pittosporum ralphii	The 'star performer'- Doubled in size!
Pittosporum roimata	Survived. Late growth spurt in autumn 2020.
Pseudopanax lessonii	Struggled, some died.
Streblus banksii	Survived but with little new growth.

As a final note, when rain finally arrived in late May, early June, many plants made significant new growth, possibly because soil and air temperatures were still very warm for this time of the year.

Native street trees and in parks affected by the extended drought

by Neville Arbury

As you drive around Auckland you will notice a considerable number of dead and dying trees. Usually they are younger, more recently planted specimens. But not always. There is much to be learned from species that have struggled, especially for those planning future plantings.

Below are listed those natives that suffered severely from the prolonged drought.

- Cabbage trees : Whether caused by the drought, or as I fear, a return of the cabbage tree disease of the 1990's, there are many dead and dying cabbage trees in the Auckland region.
- *Coprosma robusta :* This seemingly indestructible coprosma, often part of motorway plantings, they suffered terribly by the end of the drought.
- *Griselinia littoralis* : As outlined in the autumn newsletter, tens of thousands of this species died during the drought, I have approached local nurseries pleading with them to stop providing this plant for sale in the Auckland area. An extreme reaction indeed but we must stop what is becoming an annual carnage.
- Kauri trees : As if our iconic native does not have enough problems with kauri dieback, young, newly planted kauris were 'dropping like flies' during the drought. Why? Because young kauris have a very small root system which dries out very quickly. Kauris are also sensitive to movement around and over the root zone. Mulch heavily and water deedly (when allowed) during hot summer months.
- Rewarewa : Sadly there are many dead rewarewas planted as street trees around Auckland. They will not flourish in heavy clay soils and dry out very quickly in free draining volcanic soils. In addition they are severely affected by thrips, especially during long hot summers.
- Rimu : In a similar fashion to kauris, young rimus die very quickly during exceptionally dry summers. Sadly we may have to consider rimus more suitable for cooler, moister parts of New Zealand.
- Pohutukawas : Surley this robust coastal tree is unaffected by dry conditions. Alas no street tree, pohutukawas of various named varieties suffered severely, especially those planted in winter 2019. I personally hand watered a group of street tree pohutukawas in Mt Albert during February/March this year. Even with this intervention they struggled to survive!

How can this carnage of native trees be overcome?

- Correct planting time : Early to mid-winter.
- Correct planting technique : Appropriate for individual planting sites, soil types.
- Mulching in spring : Definitely not heaping grass clippings around the trunk of young trees. Only mulching when there is sufficient soil moisture.
- Providing supplementary water for the first few years after planting. I have never observed any supplementary watering by council.
- Selecting suitable plants for specific sites e.g. evidence now suggests that kauris and rewarewas are NOT suitable street trees!

A closer look at *Coprosma propinqua*, thriving in our coprosma collection at Ben's Ridge

by Neville Arbury

With the planting of three new species this winter, *Coprosma linariifolia*, *Coprosma rubra* and *Coprosma spathulata*, our collection is now over thirty species. The difficulty now lies in sourcing the remaining twenty or so species endemic to New Zealand!

The specimen *Coprosma propinqua* is thriving at Ben's Ridge. It can be regarded as possibly the most versatile of all coprosmas as its preferred habitat is so diverse, found in scrubland, forest and swamp. Located almost throughout New Zealand from Kaitaia to Stewart Island it is easily identified with its very fine leaves and bright blue berries on female plants. The form growing at Ben's Ridge comes from swamps in the Huntly area where it was selected because of its significant blue berries.

Coprosma propinqua also has one other special feature, it freely hybridises with *Coprosma robusta*. This provides an 'out' factor when I am tramping with friends and come across a fine-leaved coprosma that I cannot identify. I simply state that it must be a *Coprosma propinqua* hybrid! No doubt, sometimes I am sure I am correct.

Coprosma propinqua

... and it's berry

working bee

Friday 11th Sept 2020
8am - all day
with

Naylor Love

construction company
&
community help
to erect ceiling in
Fernglen Ed building

--your help is appreciated ---
you don't have to be physically
strong, just willing to help

BBQ 11am

Please RSVP Kelly on 021 236 5800

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?

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