

FERNGLEN NATIVE PLANT GARDENS NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021



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News from Fernglen

by Kelly Hayward, all photos by Steve Cook

They say good things come in threes and at Fernglen, we have had just that. First, at the end of October, there was generous assistance from Naylor Love construction company based in Glenfield. Thanks to their expertise and with the help of volunteers, a long-wished-for ceiling was erected in the Fernglen education room. Naylor Love supplied the majority of the materials, mostly off cuts from their many building projects. They are committed to seeking sustainable construction practices and their history in New Zealand makes an interesting read, checkout:

<https://www.naylorlove.co.nz/about-us/our-history/>.

Steve Cook has been working hard to get the lighting modernised in the building, which will be another welcome improvement.

Next the Council completed restoring the water reticulation system. Some readers will remember seeing the water feature working in the past, or seen the cracked ponds on your walks. The water feature had been in a state of disrepair for a very long time. Now water flows from a pond near the top driveway down channels passing through a series of ponds. The sound of water flowing and its visual appeal is charming and reminds me, Muriel's vision to recreate a slice of New Zealand's mountainous landscape within Fernglen has been realised again. If the water feature is not active on your visit, walking down the top driveway or moving near the top pond by the large (and only) grass area will trigger the water feature into action.

The third good thing is the tracks at Fernglen are currently being upgraded and in some cases, like Ben's Ridge, being installed for the first time. The tracks are engineered to minimise kauri-dieback disease, and becoming standard in areas where kauri trees reside. The committee is working with Council to ensure the uniqueness and integrity of the Fernglen tracks is maintained, while providing protection for our precious kauri.

While on the subject of tracks, we are very happy for dogs to visit Fernglen but if they could please be walked on a leash, this will ensure they stay on the tracks and not deviate into areas where special natives grow or be tempted to stray on to neighbouring properties.

Please take a look at the 'What's happening' page further along in the newsletter telling of the Fernglen Open Day on the 21st of March 2021. This is our major event of the year, and as always we appreciate your support. The event is one of many eco-events coordinated by Kaipatiki Project's Ecofest.

During 2020 the Fernglen committee have enjoyed meeting new people at our monthly working bees, we've been buoyed by their interest and enthusiasm.

As always, many, many thanks to all the volunteers in 2020 who helped make improvements to the gardens, whether it was painting rocks, weeding, education room maintenance, preparing of the newsletter, anything! Your help did not go unnoticed and the gardens have benefited as a result.

Best wishes for 2021!





The finished ceiling



Naylor Love even supplied the BBQ!



Kamara near the bottom of the stream



Toronia toru flowers (common name: toru)



Creeping fuchsia (*Fuchsia procumbens*) - the only fuchsia with standing and not hanging flowers



Jovellana sinclairii



This grew on a dead kanuka branch, near the classroom windows

The annual assessment of pohutakawa flowering, November-December 2020

by Neville Arbury

Overall a poor season's flowering, after a very early promising start in November. Flowering this season can be best described as sporadic!

After many years of trying to identify the "causal agent" for promoting a "mast" year of flowering, I was optimistic that the prolonged dry weather throughout 2020 may well have contributed to exceptional flowering. This was not the case. A classic example of "patchy" flowering was provided at Okahu Bay where there are many mature pohutakawas. I have been observing these trees for over 25 years, and this year they were a mixed bunch with two trees covered with deep red flower, while some produced no flowers at all, and the remainder were patchy. This was typical of pohutakawa throughout Auckland. Reports from Northland and Coromandel painted a similar disappointing picture.



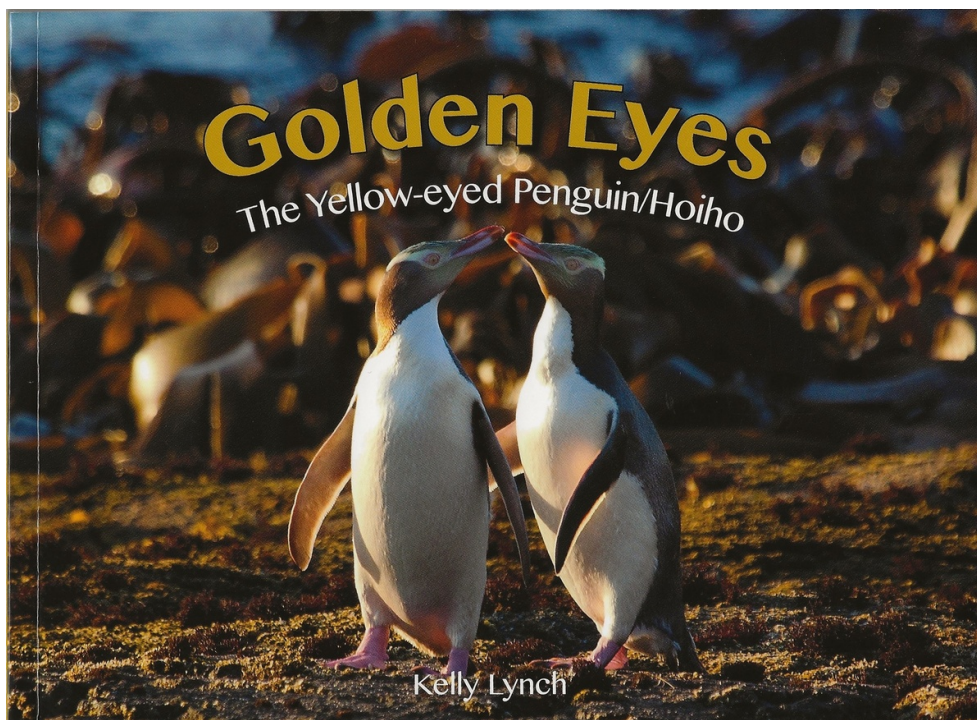
Pohutukawa flowering at Fernglen

Of interest is how early pohutakawa commenced flowering in 2020. From mid-November onwards. This is a trend that has been noticeable over the past few years, possibly related to global warming. Almost all pohutakawas had finished flowering up to a week before Christmas.

In the Wellington region it was reported that northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*), had a mast year! A one in ten years flowering season. Our pohutukawa relative (*Metrosideros bartlettii*), growing near the entrance to Fernglen was flowering at the time of our November working bee, producing clusters of small pure white flowers. Lindsay from Joy plants collected seed from this tree last year and reported that they germinated very quickly. Great news for this highly endangered species.

Book review: *Golden Eyes, The Yellow Eyed Penguin/Hoiho* by Kelly Lynch

by Neville Arbury



A little different from the usual botanical book review, this is a children's book written by Kelly Lynch, chairperson of the Fernglen Management Committee and grand daughter of Muriel Fisher. Kelly is vastly experienced in wildlife photography. Her expertise is well illustrated by superb photography throughout the publication. Written in very clear English, the book tells the story of a hoiho couple, Golden Eyes and Curio and they baby Nugget.

We learn that hoihos only live on the rocky coastline of southern parts of the South Island, that they mate for life, spend all day fishing and sadly that there are many threats to the hoiho: dogs, cats, rats, ferrets, stoats, and weasels.

Kelly's photographs capture the hoiho as they wander through the flax tunnel to a small cave. Here both, Golden Eyes and Curio help to keep the egg warm and later feed baby Nugget as he grows to eventually resemble his parents.

A short glossary is helpful to understand the hoiho, and a map shows where to find these particular penguins in the South Island. As someone who has enjoyed observing hoihos at Curio Bay in the Catlins, it is pleasing to see their lives recorded and made available to young people. My five-year-old grandson loves the book he received for Christmas.

Congratulations to the author Kelly. Hopefully, this will be the first of many publications capturing the essence of some of our rare and endangered birds. Highly recommended.

A unique approach to revegetation, the Australian example

by Neville Arbury

Recently in large areas of New South Wales and Victoria that were ravaged by bush fires last summer, a unique method of revegetation has been experimented with. While the Australian flora has over millions of years adapted to the inevitability of bush fires, major fires are still incredibly damaging to the flora and fauna. Australian authorities faced with the enormous numbers of lost animals and birds in the fires last summer, have decided to speed up the process of natural revegetation by the use of drones to broadcast seed over vast areas, particularly areas difficult to access. This method has also provided the opportunity to increase the number of specific eucalyptus species that are the preferred food of koalas. A hopper full of seed is attached to the drone which is then directed to specific locations requiring replanting. As many Australian plant seeds are quite small, it was estimated the 46,000 seeds could be delivered by a drone in a single operation.

It will be interesting to take note of studies to ascertain how successful this method of revegetation proves to be. I have always been amazed at the revegetation from a seemingly "black charcoal" expanse when walking through fire ravaged areas of Victoria and Tasmania. New growth sprouts from the soil and from trees that are simply "black silhouettes"! The irony is that Australian bush requires regular fires for seeds to germinate. Sadly, the build-up of fallen branches and leaves, so typical of Australian bush, act as kindling when fires break out. Hence small outbreaks of fire rapidly expand to large, dangerous bush fires.

Book Review: *Joseph Banks* by Grantlee Kieza

by Neville Arbury

A fascinating study of the enigma that was Joseph Banks. The author notes

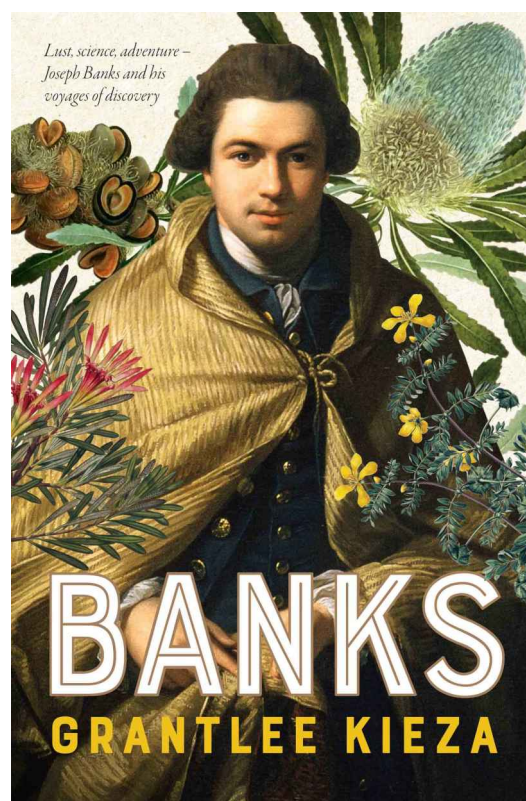
"that he was a man of passion whose influence spanned the globe. A fearless adventurer, his fascination with beautiful women and his lust for scientific knowledge."

The book provides us with a very detailed account of Banks' early years. His struggles at Oxford University until he finally settled on his love of botany, personally hiring a tutor to the subject. A first at Oxford. The voyage of the Endeavour is covered comprehensively. This was the great adventure of Banks' life. He returned to England with a vast collection of plant and animal specimens. Banks actively interacted with the indigenous people whoever the Endeavor visited, especially the island of Tahiti.

For various reasons this was Banks' sole major journey to the Pacific. Based in England Banks dedicated his life to expanding scientific knowledge in his role as president of Britain's Royal Society for forty-one years. He was also instrumental in the development of Kew Gardens, the establishment of a penal colony in Botany Bay, smuggling merino sheep from Spain to New South Wales, and starting the tea industry in India. As an incredibly wealthy man, he underwrote numerous major British journeys of exploration around the world.

Botanically the name Joseph Banks is associated with numerous New Zealand plants, e.g., *Streblus banksia*, *Astelia banksii* and in Australia the diverse genus *Banksia* commemorates the man.

The book is exceptionally well researched. Grantlee Kieza the author has written thirteen other non-fiction books including a number of outstanding cricket biographies. The writing style is very easy to "digest" as the author weaves through Banks scientific and social lives. This is an important addition to the biographies of outstanding figures who have contributed to a better understanding of the flora of New Zealand. Highly recommended indeed!



Landscaping thirteen inner city apartments with rare and endangered native plants

by Neville Arbury

As a landscape designer, when given this opportunity to design and plant a large apartment building in Sandringham, I was determined to “show case” our lesser-known natives, and especially rare and endangered species. This would help demonstrate that the plants are not rare and endangered because they are hard to cultivate, rather they are endangered because of habitat destruction and/or introduced mammals.

The soil in that part of Auckland is a fine volcanic type, perfectly draining in winter but obviously prone to drying in summer months. On this basis many coastal plants were incorporated into the design as they would be more “robust” over hot, dry summers and therefore most likely survive. As with all commercial landscaping the question of long-term care is always problematical.

For screening the four-storey building I used *Coprosma aredata*, *Hoheria angustifolia* and *Pittosporum huttonianum*. These species will provide a ‘light screening’ of the building while allowing light to penetrate through the foliage. Thanks to Terry Hatch at Joy Plants for supplying these rare plants.

Around the “base” of the building are extensively planted areas of contrasting shrubs underplanted with many ground covers that will help suppress future weed growth and aid in water retention. These included *Acaena inermis*, *Coprosma “Taiko”*, *Fuchsia procumbens*, *Leptinella dioica*, *Leptinella squalida*, *Leptostigma setulose*, *Lobelia angulate*, *Muehlenbeckia axellaris*, *Nertera balfouriana*, *Pimelea prostrata*, and *Pomaderris phyllicifolia* var. *Ericifolia*. Shrubs included: *Coprosma neglecta*, *Coprosma rigida*, *Coprosma rhamnoides*, *Coprosma rugosa*, *Coprosma spathulate*, *Corokia cotoneaster*, *Hebe “Mokohinau”*, *Hebe townsonii*, *Melicytus obovatus*, *Muehlenbeckia astonii*, *Olearia furfuracea*, *Pseudopanax ferox* as well as two astelias, *Astelia banksia* and *Astelia chathamica*.

Planted in early November, with the support of directed hand watering (often with watering cans because of severe water restrictions) the plants are thriving. Most areas were mulched with fine crushed bark in mid-December once plant root systems had become well established. This plus two large water tanks containing rainwater are very helpful as the dry summer continues.

In addition to the extensive native plantings, as part of environmental apartment building “philosophy”, raised planters have been built for tenants to grow their own vegetables, and the following fruit trees have been planted: apple, plum, lemon, lime, kaffir lime, mandarin, feijoa and passionfruit. An electric car is provided for the tenants as well as a large bicycle rack. Extensive solar panels on the roof help provide electricity and all appliances have the highest star energy rating. It has been very rewarding to be part of the dream that owners Blair and Julie have brought to fruition. I have confidence that the plants will continue to thrive in future, that is the real test of a successful landscape design.

The first report from our correspondent on Pitcairn Island

by Neville Arbury

One of our committee members, Mandy Osborne is spending a year on the remote Pitcairn Island where her husband is the sole policeman. Mandy has happily promised us a glimpse of the flora on Pitcairn Island and will continue to provide more information as she becomes more familiar with the island's vegetation.

A little background information: Pitcairns are a group of volcanic islands. The sole British territory in the Pacific Ocean with a combined area of 47 square kilometres and a population of 50. The islands were settled by Polynesians between 1200 and 1650 who introduced edible plants like bananas, coconut, breadfruit, and taro. The island is "best known" as the final destination of the mutineers aboard the ship *bounty*. Here they settled and burned their ship to avoid discovery. After early "difficult" years, the population reached 200 by 1857. Too many for the island to support and all were removed to Norfolk Island. Some years later some "Pitcairners" returned to the island and it is their descendants that populate the island today.

The native flora is comprised of 82 species, 11 of which are endemic. There are 250 introduced species, many are problematic. Especially the rose apple, *Syzigium jambos* and the blue flowering climber morning glory.

Plants that Many has identified so far:

Fruit Trees: Avocado, banana, citrus, breadfruit, coconuts, sugar cane, lychees, and taro

Ornamentals: Hibiscus, metrosideros species, coprosma species, rose apple, morning glory, pandanus

What's happening at Fernglen?

Open day

The annual Fernglen Native Plant Gardens open day, is booked for Sunday the 21st of March from 10:00am onwards.

No booking is required, just come and take a guided tour, self explore, purchase harder-to-find native plants or take in the ambience of the unique water feature. It is hoped the botanical illustrators will be joining us on the day and displaying their fine work.

The event is part of Kaipatiki Project's month of eco-events held on the North Shore and north of Auckland. For other events please check out: <https://kaipatiki.org.nz/ecofest/>

We look forward to seeing you there.

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

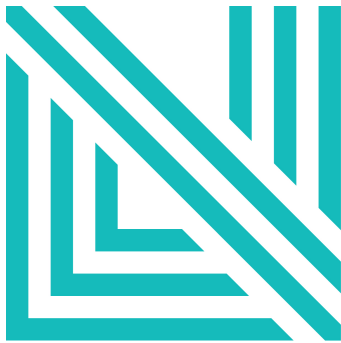
on email: fernglen.nz@gmail.com

or phone: 021 236 5800

Naylor Love

Naylor Love are committed to seeking sustainable construction practices. Their history in New Zealand makes an interesting read on their website:

<https://www.naylorlove.co.nz/about-us/our-history/>



**Naylor
Love**



Botanical Art at Fernglen

Interested?

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