

FERNGLEN NATIVE PLANT GARDENS NEWSLETTER

Winter 2024

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News from Fernglen

text and photos by Kelly Hayward

Early in June 2024 a class of hearty 2-5 year olds, their caregivers and teachers from Kāuri Park Kindergarten partook in outdoor education at Fernglen. It was their first kindergarten outing since the Covid lockdowns and Fernglen trust members were excited to host them. The children came with the purpose of learning about native forest regeneration after a weather event like the January flooding in 2022.

They strode around the tracks looking at native plants, water flow and carried out a 'tidy kiwi' activity, identifying purposely planted rubbish. Also included was the potting up of kawakawa, lacebark and other seedlings to take back to kindergarten and grow. They will plant them in their nearby forest this spring.

It was wonderful to see the interest and enthusiasm of our future stakeholders. Driving them was the energy of their teachers, following the children's lead in their enquiry of water, natural forces, learning about the consequences to our natural environment when catastrophic events occur and, what we can all do to prepare and restore in local community environments.

The photograph below is a sample of their potting, due to privacy we were not able to photograph the children.



Fifteen members of the Mt Albert Garden Group recently took a tour around Fernglen, taken by Nev, highlighting the variety in our natives. Part of their feedback was:

"Our Mt Albert Garden group had a lovely visit to Fernglen yesterday. Many thanks to Nev for his wonderful enthusiasm and knowledge which made it very special".

When visiting the gardens, due to a lot of rain and the wintery conditions, please be mindful when walking on the paving and wooden areas in the gardens and around the education room. Treatment has recently been used to prevent slimy surface build up on the wooden decking, however when wet or drying out, it can still be slippery.

It has been chilly in Kauri Road recently, despite this, its been great to meet more locals at the monthly working bees. Moving fallen branches and stone chip is a great way to keep warm on a Saturday morning!

Best wishes Kelly

Winter Plantings at Fernglen

by Neville Arbury

The majority of the plants listed found a home at Ben's Ridge where there remains some room for additional plants. The kōwhai collection now is only lacking *Sophora godleyi*, to be the complete assembly of our kōwhai species.

New Plantings, winter 2024:

- *Coprosma propinqua*
- *Coprosma rigida*
- *Coprosma walii*
- *Liberta grandiflora*
- *Liberta peregrinans*
- *Melicytus chathamicus*
- *Melicitus crassifolius*
- *Pittosporum obcordatum*
- *Phyllocladus alpinus*
- *Sophora longicaranata*
- *Sophora fulvida*
- *Sophora molloyii*
- *Sophora microphylla*
- *Sophora tetraptera*

A Look at Our Native Grass Collection at Ben's Ridge

by Neville Arbury

The grass area is predominantly a collection of carex (sedges) species. World-wide there are more than 1,000 species of sedges. Here in New Zealand there are approximately 70 species.

<i>Carex buchananii</i>	One of our taller sedges with a distinctive upright habit. Reddish-brown colour, very hardy.
<i>Carex dispacea</i>	A small, compact sedge, green light brown colour, excellent for damp areas.
<i>Carex comans</i>	A very compact sedge, light brown colour, prefers a free draining soil.
<i>Carex dissita</i>	Bright green colour, one of the few sedges to grow well in shady areas, particularly in moist soils.
<i>Carex flagillifera</i>	Reddish-brown foliage with a very distinctive weeping habit.
<i>Carex lessoniana</i>	A very vigorous growing sedge, thrives in wet soils, ideal for planting near creeks or rivers.
<i>Carex secta</i>	One of our taller sedges, thrives in swamps, very wet soil, has a very vigorous growing habit.
<i>Carex solandri</i>	Lime green foliage, a weeping habit, will tolerate growing in semi-shade.
<i>Carex tenuiculmis</i>	Brown foliage, a compact form.
<i>Carex testacea</i>	Grows naturally on Auckland's west coast, distinctive orange-red foliage.
<i>Carex trifida</i>	A Chatham Island sedge, taller growing, up to 1 metre, distinctive blue-green foliage.
<i>Carex virgata</i>	A very hardy, taller growing sedge. Will tolerate wet soils.
<i>Gahnia xanthocarpa</i>	The giant grass over two metres height that has been in this part of the grass collection for many years. Flower stems can grow up to 3 metres producing displays that are cream to light brown in colour.

Book Review: *The History of the World in 100 Plants* by Simon Barnes

by Neville Arbury

Author Simon Barnes, a journalist ha previously produced three outstanding publications, "The History of the World in 100 Animals", "How to be a Bad Birdwatcher" and "How to be a Botanist". In his latest book, that is reviewed here, Simon Barnes has written an absolute gem, quite possibly the very best botanical publication I have read for many years.

As Barnes writes in his introduction,

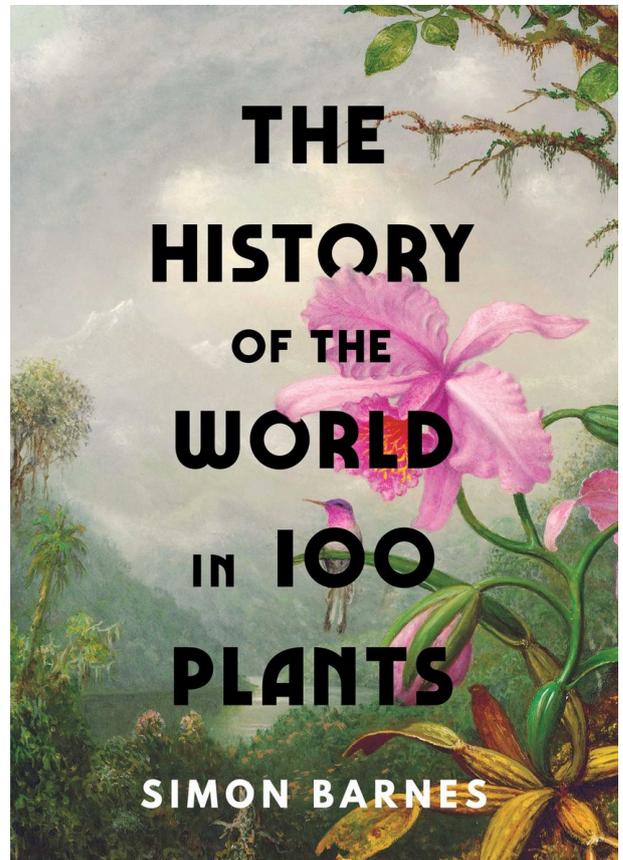
"We couldn't live for a day without plants. Our past is all about plants, our present is all tied up with plants and without plants there is no future."

With a powerful environmental message the book takes the reader around the world on a journey through the medium of plants.

Chapters relate the importance of plants in providing us with shelter, beauty, comfort, buildings, medicine, textiles, containers, instruments and many, many more. As the name of the publication states there are descriptions of 100 plants. To select some of the more fascinating is an injustice to the remainder, however some of the more intriguing are; strangler fig, cinchona, redwood, bodhi tree, rubber, opium poppy, mulberry, coffee and baobab. My favourite chapter is about the baobab tree, a tree that has fascinated me ever since seeing a photograph in a National Geographic magazine in my youth. Sometimes called the "upside down tree", this most unusual looking tree from southern Africa, Madagascar and parts of the Northern Territories in Australia can live to over two thousand years and is said to have over three hundred uses! Sadly, as the author relates, baobabs are now dying in southern Africa at an unprecedented rate.

"Once they were the perfect emblem of ancientness and longevity, they are now a vivid demonstration of impermanence and fragility of life on this planet."

This absolute gem of a book is perfect to have nearby you, when you have some spare time you can just dip into another intriguing chapter. Very highly recommended.



The Establishment of a Kōwhai Collection at Ben's Ridge

by Neville Arbury

At the June working bee five additional kōwhai species were planted at Ben's Ridge, half way up the track on the left hand side near a large existing *Sophora chathamica*. These were:

- *Sophora fulvida*
- *Sophora longicaranata*
- *Sophora microphylla*
- *Sophora molloyi*
- *Sophora tetraptera*

There is a *Sophora prostrata* in the old part of the garden, and we are hopeful of sourcing a specimen of *Sophora godleyi* before the end of the planting season.

It will be most interesting to observe the varying forms of these kōwhai species. It is often remarked that not two kōwhais are ever totally similar. Whatever shape or form, they will certainly provide a food source for our many native birds that inhabit Fernglen.

Sophoras are quite a widespread 'Cosmopolitan' genus, not restricted to New Zealand. They are found on Lord Howe Island, French Polynesia, Easter Island, Hawaii, Chile and Reunion Island.

Apart from *Sophora molloyi*, which flowers in winter, they mainly flower in spring.

The naming of kowhais has been considered problematic. While there are two clearly distinctive species, *Sophora microphylla* and *Sophora tetraptera*, others have been considered varieties of these two species. More recently these varieties have been given separate specific names.

My favourite kōwhai is the very species we don't have a plant of, *Sophora godleyi*. These are seen at their very best near Taihare, easily viewed from Highway 1. Large quite old trees, often in grass fields. Late August, September they are worth driving that far south to view the incredible flower display!



Sophora fulvida



Large leaved kōwhai *Sophora tetraptera*



Sophora mollyii



Sophora mollyii up close

Book Review: *The Forgotten Forest – In Search of the Lost Plants and Fungi of Aotearoa* by Robert Vennell

by Neville Arbury

Author Robert Vennell works as a natural science curator at the Auckland War Memorial Museum, his previous books include *"The Meaning of Trees"*, *"The History and Use of New Zealand's native Plants"* and *"Secrets of the Sea, the Story of New Zealand's Native Sea Creatures"*.

As the author writes,

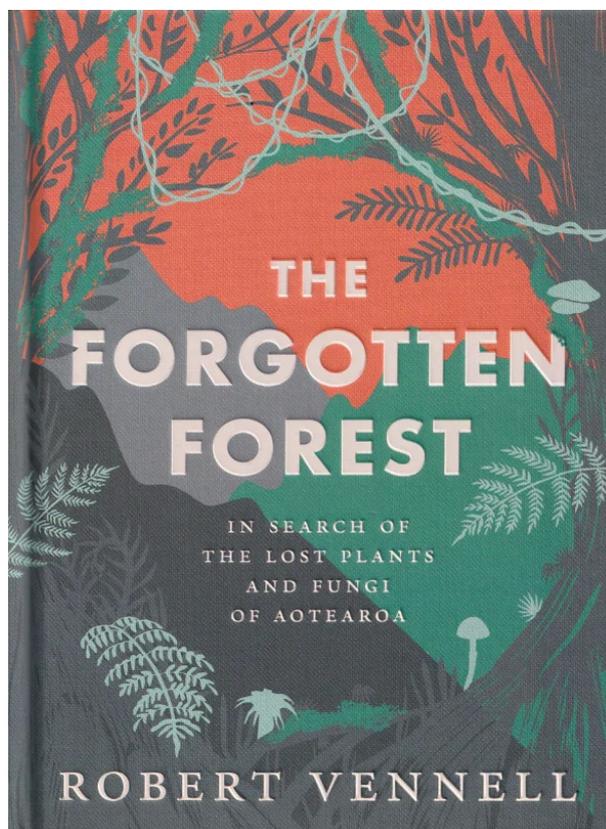
"Hidden in the dark corners of the New Zealand bush is a lost world wanting to be discovered. A forgotten forest full of tiny creatures that carpet the ground, drape over branches and logs and thread their way through the soil..."

This publication takes a close look at some of our more remarkable species including giant mosses and our many mushrooms, that can be found throughout New Zealand.

In this fascinating book the author looks at the following subjects in considerable detail, "The Mystery of Mushrooms", "The Wisdom of Lichens", "Walking with Liverworts", "The Magic of Mushrooms" and "Encounters with Slime Moulds".

Author Robert Vennell is a gifted writer, bringing the world of tiny creatures to life in a most entertaining fashion. Anyone who can make descriptions of slime moulds fascinating must be applauded, especially in the case of the "Dog Vomit Slime", *Fulgia septica*. His very simple definition of slime moulds as "intelligent mobile blobs" is particularly apt.

After reading this book, the immediate response is to head out to the nearest stand of native bush in order to discover and identify what you have just read. Robert Vennell, the author must be congratulated for introducing readers to a world that for many has not been previously noticed. Highly recommended!



Pōhutukawas Becoming a Weed in Some Parts of South Africa

by Neville Arbury

In the south-western tip of Cape Province in South Africa, conservation groups are struggling to control the spread of what is termed the New Zealand bottlebrush, our very own pohutukawa. Along with other foreign species, acacia, hakea, pine species, these exotic species smother native regrowth with their masses of seedlings and exceptionally vigorous juvenile growth.

In a similar fashion that many exotic plants were introduced to New Zealand, the pōhutukawa was brought to the Cape Province as an ornamental plant, as it is hardy in dry, coastal conditions with red flowers. South African nurserymen considered this introduction to be a winner! However, as the trees matured, flowered and eventually produced the masses of very fine brown seeds we are so familiar with, seedlings began to appear rapidly. With the seeds being so fine it was easily wind distributed and wild population are now appearing in many parts of Cape Province.

As we well know, here in Auckland, pōhutukawas will germinate in cracks of concrete, roof gutters, rock walls, in plant containers, almost anywhere, especially dry areas. There is a certain similarity to what they are experiencing in Cape Province to the impact of privet and acmena (monkey apple) in Auckland. Fortunately it is now an extremely difficult process introduce new plant species into New Zealand, with detailed protocols to be adhered to.

Coastal Native Planting at Mangawhai Heads

by Neville Arbury

I first started planting natives at my Mangawhai heads bach twenty five years ago. The site is high on a ridge overlooking the Mangawhai estuary. It is exposed to winds from most directions. The soil is heavy clay and summers can be very dry. In other words, a challenge and what has proved to be an incredible learning experience, with some surprises and of course some disappointments. I have graded the plants performance as outstanding, reasonable and disappointing. Having planted over 600 trees and shrubs, not all species are listed, mainly trees and small shrubs. Hopefully my experience will help provide guidance for anyone contemplating coastal plantings in the future.

Outstanding:

<i>Griselinia lucida</i>	The best performer of all plants
<i>Pittosporum crassifolium</i>	Superb
<i>Pittosporum fairchildii</i>	Excellent
<i>Pittosporum umbellatum</i>	Magnificent
<i>Nestegis apelata</i>	Superb
<i>Nestegis montana</i>	Now very tall
<i>Metrosideros excelsa</i>	Now very large
<i>Metrosideros robusta</i>	Thriving
<i>Metrosideros bartlettii</i>	A collection of this rare species
<i>Pennantia baylisiana</i>	A single specimen, thriving
<i>Pseudopanax lessonii</i>	Very successful
<i>Sophora fulvida</i>	Flowers freely every year
<i>Coprosma crassifolia</i>	Thriving
<i>Coprosma propinqua</i>	Thriving
<i>Muehlenbeckia astonii</i>	most successful shrub

Reasonable:

Melicope ternata

Melicytus macrophyllus

Melicytus ramiflorus

Myrsine australis Very disappointing

Dysoxylum spectabile

Elingamita johnsonii

Disappointing:

Corynocarpus laevigatus Surprising

Hedycarya arborea

Olearia angulata

Entelea arborescens Very short lived

Planchonella costata Very slow to grow

Meryta sinclairii Very disappointing

Pittosporum cornifolium



Muehlenbeckia astonii



Griselinia lucida



Metrosideros bartlettii at Fernglen

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

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

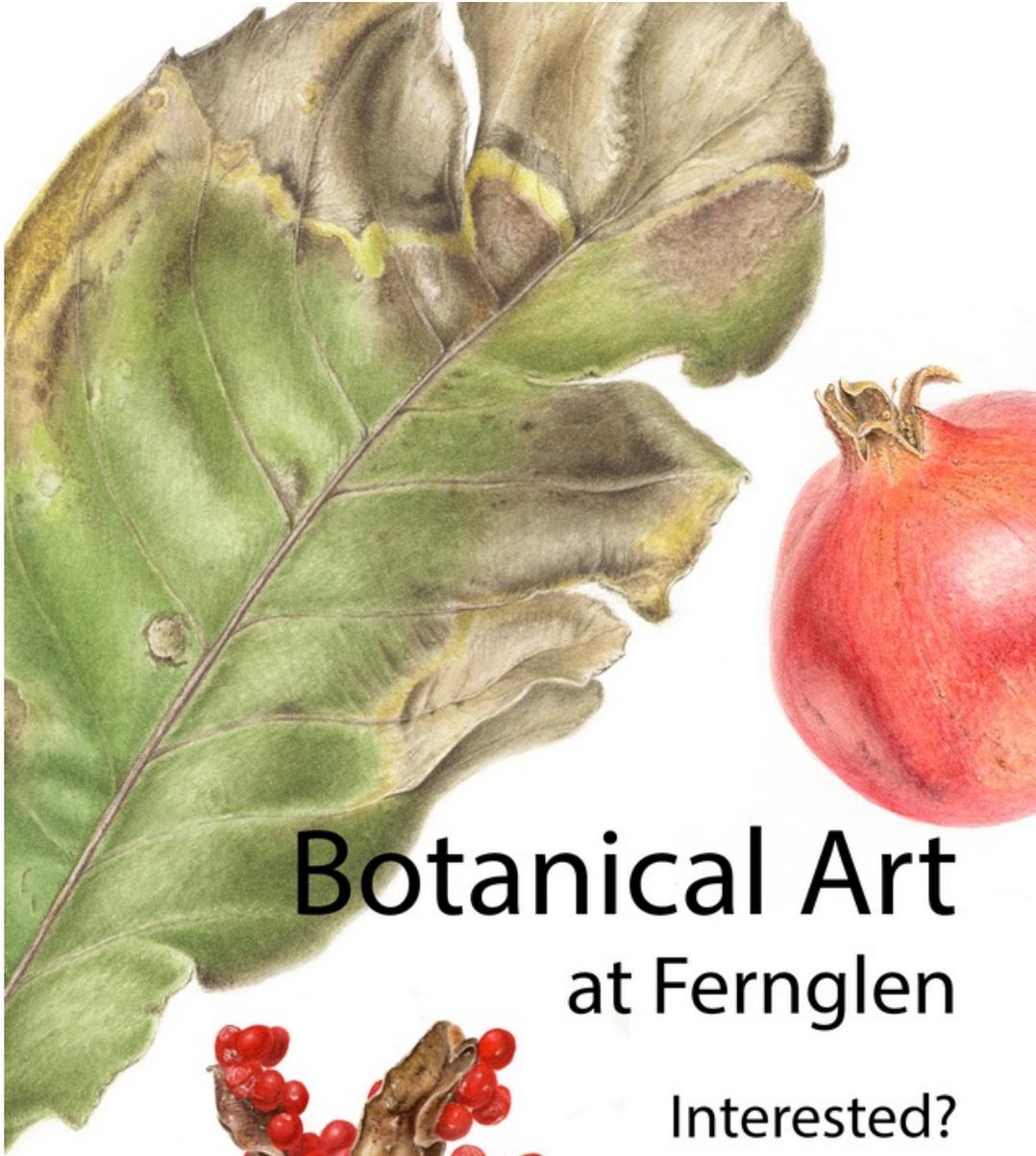
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Botanical Art at Fernglen

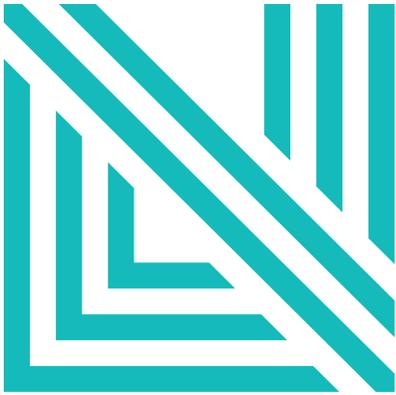
Interested?

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

Naylor Love

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