

Newsletter

*Featuring: Teaching/children's garden
Spring Festival
Fun fungi*

August 2011



Farewell to a good Friend

**AGM: Thursday 15 September
5.30pm in the Treehouse**

A reminder: Membership payment is due. Forms were sent out in July, so if you haven't paid yet, please send the enclosed form and payment to:
Membership Secretary, P O Box 28-065, Kelburn, Wellington 6012



President's Patch

I should begin by recording, with great regret, the death of Winsome Shepherd on 4 June. As members will know, Winsome was a true friend of the Botanic Garden and made a huge contribution to its maintenance and development. A fuller tribute to Winsome will be carried elsewhere in this newsletter but I should like to let you know that at its meeting on 20 June the FOBG Committee "recorded with appreciation her outstanding contribution to the Friends, and to the Wellington Botanic Garden, over a long period of time. Her role in support of the Garden, indeed as its conscience, was recalled with gratitude and affection".

Members may know that Winsome had earlier this year donated a Roy Cowan "lantern" sculpture to be placed in the Garden. Your committee has been in discussion with Garden management about where to position this sculpture. It has now been agreed to install it in the lift entrance area under the Treehouse (the sculpture needs to be located in a protected environment). The Friends have funded the plinth on which the sculpture stands and a plaque acknowledging Winsome's involvement with the Garden.

The future status of the Skyline restaurant and car park area has been in the news recently. Legally the area of ground presently occupied by the Skyline and car park is part of the Botanic Garden – it was vested in the Garden in 1891 by an act of Parliament. However since 1904, after the completion of the Cable Car, limited commercial use of the site has been allowed. The current owner of the lease had asked the Council to consider altering the status of this area of land, in effect to freehold it. Your committee were of the view that while we accepted the current allowable uses now permitted we were

strongly opposed to any alteration of the legal status of land. We argued that the existing reserve status of this area of land should be protected and no changes should be made to its existing designation. I communicated these views to the Mayor in a letter and later spoke to the full Council at its meeting on 29 June when the issue was considered. At this meeting the Council rejected any move to change the legal status of the land in question and instructed Council officials to enter into a dialogue with the lessee with a view to making the Skyline a viable commercial proposition.

I think this is a satisfactory way forward. We, along with a number of other stakeholders (local residents, the Cable Car Company, WCC and indeed Wellingtonians in general), recognise the unique location of the Skyline restaurant and most, I consider, would like to see the facility become a vibrant and recognised feature in the city. We will be part of an ongoing discussion about the Skyline's future.

Our Annual General Meeting is to be held on Thursday 15 September in the Treehouse Seminar Room at 5.30pm. The papers about the AGM are being distributed together with this newsletter. Councillor Helene Ritchie who is Portfolio Leader, Natural Environment, has agreed to address us after our formal proceedings are completed. I urge as many members as possible to participate in our AGM. This is an occasion when members can make their views known; your committee would welcome feedback and ideas about what the Friends can do in the future. We also need nominations for committee membership – can you join us?

Frank Wilson

Botanic Bulletin

My first action in this report must be to thank the Friends for their support for the Children's/ Teaching Garden workshop of 11 June. This proved to be a very constructive event, with excellent presentations from Andrew Laidlaw and Mere Brewer and very useful conversations in the afternoon breakout sessions. There was considerable discussion in the breakout groups

about whether it would be a teaching or a children's garden as it was difficult to reconcile both. The stream of ideas from the workshops lend themselves well to both and for reasons of practicality it is perhaps easier to regard it in the first instance as a children's garden but with a strong teaching subtext. I have commissioned Wraight + Associates to prepare the concept for the garden to support further discussion and fundraising for the project. Another important



comment from Andrew and Mere was that it is important to stay focussed on and true to plants as it is very easy to get distracted by gimmicks, messages and processes which are at a tangent to those delivered by botanic gardens.

The draft Long Term Tree Plan has been issued for comment. This is the culmination of a lot of work by James Jones and Leanne Killalea in particular. The plan presents an opportunity to manage the framework tree population in the Botanic Garden and Bolton Street consistently and with a degree of foresight over the next 30 years. It takes a close look at the significance of the trees in the landscape, their heritage values, their rarity and where possible the circumstances of their accession into the Garden. Recommendations have been made as to the management of the trees, when they are to be replaced and with what. While we have insisted on naming every replacement we do recognise that over time circumstances may change, new opportunities may arise and that there will need to be changes. We are looking forward to sharing a workshop with the Friends to discuss the plan and its implications for the gardens.

My thanks also to the Friends in their support and advocacy for the Garden over the proposals for the Skyline site. From the Council's decision to seek further consultation we are working through what form that should take and the key stakeholders who should be involved. The Friends are at the top of that list! We still have no sense of what is being proposed for the site and see the stakeholder workshops as a useful way of airing community concerns and expectations, and for Panorama Ltd, the owner and lease-holder, to be more transparent about their intentions. The renovation of the Cable Car's Kelburn Terminus also offers an opportunity for a well integrated proposal which will benefit the city, the Botanic Garden and the other attractions at the top of the Cable Car.

James Jones's team, along with other teams from Parks & Gardens, have spent a considerable amount of time recovering the Cable Car track margins and preparing for replanting in time for the Rugby World Cup. Some minor landscape work has also been done and planting will begin in early August. This will lead to a huge improvement in the Cable Car experience as the focus is increasingly on the track and margin as the views to the city become increasingly limited.

A large seedling-origin *Eucalyptus* was removed from Druid Hill recently, which will give more planting space for the historic pines that will continue to be planted along the north face of the hill. We are keen to get as many replacement trees underway as possible along here so that they are well established by the time it comes to remove some of the trees further up the hill.

We have had some minor changes in staff, with Reuben Herrick joining us a gardener in the Rose Garden and Jessica Dodds commencing her apprenticeship. Kirsten Lowe has taken extended leave to look after their new baby.

Maria Smart has commissioned Botanic Garden coffee mugs for the shop which arrived this week and will be a popular stock item. New postcards are also available. These complement the tea towels designed last year, with all gradually building towards a suite of gardens-branded products. Look out also for the new book being published in September on New Zealand trees. The authors are Rob Lucas, who has close connections to the Botanic Garden and Otari, and Dr John Dawson, who is the head guide at Otari and Otari Wiltons Bush Trust member. Titled 'New Zealand's Native Trees' this book takes over from the classic JT Salmon's 'Trees of New Zealand'. The preview pages I have seen are stunning and I will certainly be lining up for my copy!

The Friends' garden at Druid Hill is taking shape after a long but necessary period of weed control. Recovered plants have been replanted and the garden should look a treat for spring and summer. Thank you to those who continue to participate in this project.

Look out for this year's Spring Festival programme. Coinciding with the Rugby World Cup, and whether you like rugby or not, the Carnivale, of which Spring Festival is part, is going to be a magnificent experience. With all the visitors in town we are looking for more volunteers to assist with hosting at the top of the Cable Car. If you can assist please contact the Treehouse.

I look forward to catching up with you at the Annual General meeting.

*On behalf of the Botanic Garden team,
David Sole*



Winsome Shepherd

Friends founder and Botanic Garden supporter (and conscience) Winsome Shepherd died on June 4. Her son Bryan has kindly allowed us to use parts of his eulogy for his mother. Then Phil Tomlinson and Helen McAndrew take up the story of this remarkable woman's involvement with the Botanic Garden – and inextricably stitched into Winsome's story is the Friends early history.

Rona Winsome Shepherd, or Winsome as she preferred to be known by, was born in Christchurch on 13 March 1921. Winsome, or Winnie/ Win as people affectionately called her, was the only child of Freda and Archibald Denne.

In 1934 her father was appointed Inspector of Schools and in this capacity travelled widely throughout NZ and Fiji, while based in Wellington.

Whilst based in Wellington Winsome commenced her secondary education at Marsden College. She spent four years at the college distinguishing herself as an athletics champion excelling at hurdles, long-jump and short sprints. She then threw herself into basketball (an old version of netball) and excelled at her academic studies. Her father was a marvellous teacher and this rubbed off on Winsome.

In her final year of secondary schooling the family moved to Auckland when her father became the Auckland Inspector of Schools. Winsome reluctantly started her finals year of schooling at St Cuthbert's College and typically joined everything possible.

In 1939 she became a student at Auckland University studying a Science degree majoring in Botany and Zoology. At this time she really blossomed as an All-Action type of girl. She joined the Field Club, which led to many tramps around the North Island and skiing at Mt Ruapehu. In those days it was hard work skiing as there were no chair lifts and you had to carry your skis up the mountain after a run. Through the club she became very good friends with June Hillary and spent many holidays with the family and June's illustrious brother.

She became an accomplished rabbit shooter, amateur photographer and fishing expert at this time.

Winsome was a member of the Student

Executive and was the University Singles Tennis Champion. Through tennis she travelled to Christchurch for an Easter Tournament in 1940 – where she met her future husband Ron, who was a member of the Canterbury Shooting Team. Ron was also a science student and with his tall dark looks was an instant attraction for her. He was hard to catch though! They kept in touch with each other as WW2 broke out. Ron joined the navy and being a maths wizard was assigned to the newly formed Radar division. He was one of the first to use this new invention and it led to him spending a lot of time training in Boston, USA and the UK.

Meanwhile, life in war-time NZ had suddenly changed quite a bit. The threat of an invasion from Japan was very real and Winsome's father made a contingency plan for Winsome and her mother to hide in a cave in the Te Kuiti region in the event of an invasion.

The other threat at the time, particularly to NZ's young men serving overseas, was the placement of thousands of suave American servicemen in NZ. Her father's careful chaperoning of Winsome suddenly required upgrading as her strikingly attractive looks drew the attention of many suitors. Winsome kept a flame for Ron in spite of the war being very difficult for him (the Leander vessel was sunk in the battle of Guadalcanal and he returned from the war with TB).

After university Winsome joined the workforce via the Plant Diseases division of the DSIR for eight years. This involved her completing ground-breaking timber research, studying moulds in state houses, plant diseases such as borer and termites and the entry of pine trees into NZ (a favourite of hers). Days crawling under damp, dirty houses held no fears for Winsome.

Following the end of WW2 and Ron's return to health, they were eventually married, after a long eight-year courtship at Napier, in 1948. Ron was working as an Industrial Chemist for ICI (now Orica) in Christchurch and that is where they enjoyed their first years of married life.



A move to Wellington saw a continuation of her love for horticulture and floral art. She became a judge in flower displays and as a child I recall vividly spending a lot of time visiting wonderful gardens in the lower North Island and flower shows. Mum really loved gardening and despite coming to the conclusion that, "Wellington is not an easy place to garden," she always had a colourful, impressive garden.

Having settled in Wellington, the lure of fishing on the Wairarapa coast attracted both Mum and Dad to buy a section at Castlepoint and build a house on it in 1962. They used to spend many weekends trekking over the Rimutakas and over windy, gravel roads to Castlepoint as the new house took shape. In those days crayfish were literally crawling over the rocky reefs and Winsome, being the female equivalent of Gone Fishing's Graeme Sinclair, was the ideal person to enjoy this plentiful hunting ground. In the 1960's it was very unusual to have such a passionate interest from a female perspective.

Mum discovered the Castlepoint daisy, *Brachyglottis compactus*, [this rare daisy only grows naturally on the crumbled limestone of the reef and Castle Rock at Castlepoint – Ed] and at this time started writing articles for journals such as the Dairy Exporter.

After retiring early Ron died back in 1988 and from this point on Winsome achieved a tremendous amount in 23 years. She travelled a lot both by herself and with various friends such as Patricia Boden, through Asia / the US/ the Middle East / UK, Italy and frequent trips to Australia. Aside from her sporting and horticultural interests Mum turned her hand to a variety of activities including photography, mid-week ladies golf and needlework. She was also a talented pianist.

Mum loved cats from a very early age. In fact she always owned a cat, believing they were a more intelligent form of life than dogs! Despite this she did own a dachshund Kippy and in its later years showed the dog, winning various medals for best of breed.

In the years when she should have been retired Winsome cranked up her activity levels. She became a prolific writer and historian. She worked for several years as a research historian at Te Papa and during this time started the first of many books – The Wellington Botanic Garden – written in conjunction with Walter Cook.

She continued to be a prolific writer – completing another small book on the Wellington Botanic Garden in 1992; finishing a book, started by her husband, on Gold & Silversmithing in 19th and 20th Century NZ in 1995 (which was shortlisted for the Montana NZ Book awards); and finally a book on Wellington's heritage, plants, gardens and landscape in 2000. Again, this was shortlisted for the NZ Book Awards. I was always impressed by this output from someone who confessed she hated English and could not write!

Perhaps her proudest achievement was being awarded an ONZM (Officer of the NZ Order of Merit), for services to horticulture, in the 1998 Queens Birthday Honours List.

Winsome was not perfect – but none of us are really. I will always remember her as an extremely wise and determined person with a voracious appetite for adventure. Underneath it she had a heart of gold and was a very kind woman. She really loved befriending people and helping them to achieve their potential.

We will all miss her.

Bryan Shepherd

21 years ago, on 5th April 1990 a meeting was held with the aim of forming a Friends organisation to support the Wellington Botanic Garden. Phil Tomlinson delved into the Oral History Archive to discover how Winsome Shepherd became involved in this Garden and her role in the formation of the Friends. Thanks also go to Richard Nanson for further information.

Winsome gained early experience in writing, notwithstanding that she believed English was not one of her strong subjects. The Historic Places Trust employed her to conduct research into plant material introduced into New Zealand from the early missionary period onwards. In

researching early photographs in the national museum, now Te Papa, she found that they held the early archives of the Garden. In 1977 she spent some three months looking at this material, and the Historic Places Trust invited her to write



a brief article of her findings. They then concluded that there was probably a book based on this material. The possibility was discussed with the then Director of the Garden, Ian Galloway. He was astonished to learn that the Council had not founded the garden, and that it had an earlier history involving the New Zealand Institute, the forerunner of the Royal Society of NZ. He immediately got the Council's involvement researched. This led to Winsome being asked to write the early history. Walter Cook, who had worked with Winsome when she was involved in the gardening page of the NZ Dairy Exporter magazine, was asked to cover the Council's involvement in the Garden. The book was finally published in 1988.

In 1977 Winsome, while looking at the work of the NZ Institute, reviewed the work of James Hector, the first Director of the Garden and founder of the Colonial Museum. The museum was specifically looking at the use of material for industrial purposes in the establishing colony, the most important of these being timber, as native plants were of questionable value. Winsome revealed that a large number of possibilities were considered, but especially conifers, of which *Pinus radiata* and *Cupressus macrocarpa* were the most significant. Between 1870 and 1877 48 species of conifers were introduced into the Wellington Botanic Garden, many of which remain. The Forestry Research Institute based in Rotorua in particular were interested in the distribution throughout the country, as they were not aware of the source of many of the trees they were propagating. Winsome compiled a number of significant papers concerning this subject, especially related to the Canterbury area. She also produced an important paper on the introduction of *Pinus radiata* into New Zealand. (R. W. Shepherd: Early Importations of *Pinus radiata* to New Zealand and Distribution in Canterbury to 1885: Implications for the Genetic Make up of *Pinus radiata* Stocks. As published in *Horticulture in New Zealand*. Also available on the Friends web site <http://friendswbq.org.nz/PinusRadiataToNewZealand.pdf>)

Winsome's early university training was in botany and zoology, and she subsequently worked in disciplines associated with these fields. She also became closely involved with horticulture. Arising from her work on the Garden history and association with many involved in the Garden, in

1987 she was very supportive of the idea of forming a Friends organisation for the Wellington Botanic Garden. Those who were additionally closely involved at this time were Walter Cook, Richard Nanson and Ian Galloway. Richard Nanson, as the then Director of the Garden, instigated the idea, pulling in Councillor Ruth Gotleib, Mrs.L.V. Martin and several others. Taken to lunch at what is now the Amora Hotel, they discussed how to work up the 'right' contacts within the greater Wellington community! All this plus quite a lot of background work was undertaken before the first meeting was held.



Both nationally and internationally, friends organisations had been formed for many botanic gardens and other organisations. Also in his Oral History record, Richard Nanson noted he had been reading about various Friends organisations, and as the then Director, supported the idea. He visited Australia studying the activities and value of such organisations. It became apparent that one of the main reasons for their establishment was to raise funds to supplement local government funding, and also to provide another voice in support of the Garden. They also played an important part in assisting the development and management of their respective gardens. His report provided significant support for the local formation of such an organisation.

As part of Winsome's original 1987 support for the proposal of forming the Friends organisation, she set out what she believed should be the aims of the organisation.

- 1 *Extend the use and enjoyment of the garden by improving community awareness of the educational historical cultural recreational and scientific functions of the garden*
- 2 *Raise funds and lend support for approved projects and activities*
- 3 *Provide technical advice to management*
- 4 *Encourage participation with botanic garden management in protecting and growing of endangered plants and the preservation of their genetic resource*
 - a *Projects to involve memorial structures, special plant collections, etc.*
 - b *Activities to involve the 1991 centennial, management of the garden by the Wellington City Council.*

It was intended that the first two aims would involve the training of guides, to provide a service

to groups visiting the garden, and the development and maintenance of a library, gift shop, information centre, seminars, exhibitions and other related activities.

As she noted in her 2008 interview, most of these aims have been substantially achieved over the last 21 years.

Following the initial letter, in October 1989 an invitation was sent to the Parks and Reserves Department of the Wellington City Council to become a member of a steering committee to look at the formation of a Friends, and a number of other interested people were also invited. This group was to produce a draft constitution before a public meeting was called and the organisation officially established. This inaugural meeting of the Steering Committee was held on 13 November 1989 at the Otari Interpretative Centre. The constitution proposed was based on that existing for the Auckland and Dunedin Friends, with assistance from the NZ Institute of Horticulture.

Phil Tomlinson

*Founding Friend and guide **Helen Macandrew** takes up the story.*

Twenty-one years ago, on 5 April 1990, a meeting was held in the Begonia House in the Lady Norwood Rose Garden to gauge interest in the formation of a new society, the Friends of the Wellington Botanic Garden. This was well-attended, and a further meeting was arranged for 17 May 1990 in The Long Room of the RA Vance Stand at the Basin Reserve.

At this meeting, a committee was elected: Ray White was elected President, Nola Holmes Vice President, John Gordon Secretary, and Errol Hanna Treasurer. There were eight nominations for four committee positions.

The main objective of the Friends was to help people – Friends, other residents of Wellington district, or visitors – to enjoy the Botanic Garden. It tried to do this, as Ray White said in his Annual Report of 1993, “by offering guided tours, by servicing the information and sales desk at the Education Centre in the weekends, by helping management improve the Garden, by organising educational talks, trips and seminars and by helping to mount displays on botanical, horticultural or art subjects”.

The first committee meeting was held at Parks and Reserves in Anvil House on 28 May 1990. Richard Nanson, Director Parks and Reserves, was very supportive, and continued to give ongoing support and encouragement for several years. Each committee member was given one of a range of selected tasks. Guiding was one of them, and training of the Guides now began, to make them familiar with all aspects of this beautiful Garden. Over a period of time the guides traversed every path and track, learning their names and the important species found near each, as well as learning the history and general layout of the Garden. A great deal of help was given to the Guides by Winsome Shepherd, and also by staff from Parks and Reserves. Walter Cook, who had written with Winsome the very significant book *The Botanic Garden Wellington, a New Zealand History 1840 to 1987*, also gave help to the Guides.

On Sunday 30 September, the first Spring Breakfast was held, followed by a guided walk up Stable Valley to see the magnificent camellias.



The breakfast was an outstanding success, repeated for several years as part of the Spring Festival in the Garden.

On Thursday, 1st November 1990, the first evening talk was given, this being held in the classroom at the Education Centre. The speaker was Kenneth Cox who spoke on rhododendrons and the history of their introduction to the Garden.

On Sunday, 18th November, when the Rose Show was held in the Begonia House, the Friends shared a table with members of the Rose Society, while on Monday, 3rd December, the Friends hosted a book launch – “Cottage Gardening in NZ” by Christine Dann.

On Friday, 14 December, Ray White, John Gordon and Helen Macandrew met at the Director’s old house where we were to be given the use of a room for our committee meetings, guiding activities and other uses. This giving of a home base gave strength and focus to the

activities of the society. *from the Donal Duthie postcard collection*

To round off the first year of the society, on 12 April 1991, Sir David Attenborough came to open the Education Centre, and to commemorate the event by planting a shrub. The Friends were invited, and many members were in attendance on this significant occasion.

From time to time, the Friends held money-raising events, any money raised being used to enhance the Garden. The Pavilion at the Duck Pond was partially funded by such support from the Friends.

The Centenary of the Wellington Botanic Garden was held on the weekend of 21-22 December 1991. One hundred years earlier the Garden had been formally handed over to the care of the Wellington City Council.

Helen Macandrew

Children’s/teaching garden workshop

Behind the Botanic Garden nursery is a terraced bank where cut flowers used to be grown for civic floral arrangements and where, more recently, vegetable-growing workshops have been held during Spring Festival. On a chilly day in June a workshop to consider the patch’s transformation into a children’s or teaching garden was held.

The session was opened by Friends VP Phil Tomlinson, who welcomed what he called “a select group” and told them that the concept of a teaching garden is very much part of the Garden’s history. In 1868 there was a teaching garden where the Soundshell is now. Its purpose was to show settlers what could be grown here and how to grow it. He said the guest speakers had been through the making of children’s/teaching gardens and their input would prove to be very valuable.



from the Donal Duthie postcard collection

Garden manager David Sole apologised for the failed heatpump on such a chilly day then went on to say that the purpose of this workshop was to brainstorm the concept and put ideas on the table; to understand users’ expectations; to

understand how we articulate traditional uses of plants; to identify key functions of plants, how they connect with communities and interact with people; and to demonstrate the connections of plants to all life.

He showed slides of other teaching gardens; as he said, “the beauty of Google is that you can travel the world in 30 minutes”...from Chelsea Physic Garden (1673) to Nairobi, Innsbruck, Brooklyn and Auckland, to the Adelaide Botanic Garden’s teaching programme’s “licence to imagine.” He noted that there are 65 ethnic communities in Wellington.

The first guest speaker was Mere Brewer, project manager of the Potter Children’s Garden in the Auckland Botanic Gardens. She started in there as an apprentice, became a full-time gardener and was later given this project to manage. The Auckland Council’s Environmental Education department have teachers based in the ABG. They suggested the need for a teaching or children’s garden and so the programme began. The intention was to create a working garden that could withstand both people and time. It had several design incarnations before the current layout was settled on and cost around half a million dollars. Mere told the audience about the various stages of design and consultation, the fantastic sponsors who helped out, the resources needed to complete the project and very importantly, some of the pitfalls involved. Challenges included having many stakeholders, over-passionate team members’ “creative tension”, the weather, design changes during development and managing contractors. She said it was sometimes hard to keep the focus on plants. A major benefactor of this project was the

Potter Masonic Trust which is named after Frederick Potter (1857 - 1941) who dedicated his life to helping young people.

The next speaker was Andrew Laidlaw, a landscape architect from the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, who told us about how their Ian Potter Foundation Children’s Garden was set up and managed. A small team had several years to complete this \$1.7million project. They wanted to connect children to plants as opposed to having a gimmicky “Disneyland” approach; encouraging the users to connect, through play, with the landscape. Andrew said they may not come back to the Garden as teenagers or even young adults, but they would as parents of young children. As such there was a need to make parents comfortable too, so they were fortunate in being able to construct the garden near a café (place for parents to pick up coffees!) and a place for them to sit and feel able to let their children go (i.e. a safe environment).

He said a vegetable garden is an amazing place to see other things happen; it’s the best place for plant-related learning and facilitates community/gardener interaction.

As part of the setup process, they took children to particular places and then sat back and watched what they did. Andrew said that interestingly, children need to be given permission to touch things. The Melbourne



garden is closed two days a week plus for two months each year to give it a chance to 'rest' and recover.

Both guest speakers advocated small teams under just one project manager for the construction stage. Andrew said there were three important criteria for success: soil preparation, plant selection and "get plants in as big as you can" – for two reasons, one being bigger plants

cope better, the other that soil compaction stops the smaller plants growing well. Strap-foilage plants work better – if a kid falls on a lavender it may never recover; an astelia or flax bounces back much more quickly. The downside is fewer flowers in the garden.

After lunch the participants had a close look at the proposed site then split up into groups for the brainstorming part of the workshop.

A Frenzy of Fungi

*Ros Iles has been keeping her eyes down -
and look what she found.*



*The Toad's Tea Party painted by Beatrix Potter for the unpublished Book of Rhymes. Source: Mushroom Miscellany by Patrick Harding; Collins, 2008. An extract from this book: In the poem the Toad's Tea Party her illustration shows seven toads seated on toadstools enjoying a meal including 'pats of witches' butter', a common name for the black, jelly like fungus *Exidia glandulosa*. Beatrix Potter had a soft spot for fungi, studying them in the Lakes District.*

This past autumn has been especially mild, with enough rain to be a very good 'year for fungi'. Meaning that those fungi with fruiting bodies (often manifesting as mushrooms or toadstools) that are visible to the eye, were there to be seen in the Botanic Garden.

Fungi are classified between plants and animals and also include

yeasts, mildews and moulds. In conjunction with algae or cyanobacteria they form lichens. Many fungi are microscopic. Unlike plants, they cannot capture energy directly from the sun but must feed on other organisms. Some fungi (bracket fungi) live directly on rotten wood.

The body of a mushroom is not visible, being fine white threads called hyphae that exist underground. Only the fruiting body grows above ground. If you lift a mushroom out of the ground the fine white threads of its hyphae radiate outwards from below the stalk. Fungi can be huge and cover hundreds of hectares underground. One fungus, *Armillaria*, or honey mushroom, gained fame in 1992 as the largest living organism in the world. [A great quiz question the answer to which most people think is 'blue whale' – Ed] The original discovery covered 15 hectares in Wisconsin, USA. In 2000 another, covering 900 hectares (2200 acres) was found in Oregon, USA. It is estimated to be 1500 years old and weigh 10,000 tons. DNA and other tests show that these are individuals, not clones. The fruiting bodies of these fungi are normal size, 50-90 grams.

In May I wandered through the Garden, mostly where the soil is not regularly cultivated, and found more than 30 varieties. There would be many more than just the ones I saw. Mushroom caps had diameters ranging from 2mm to 250mm; colours of white, yellow, red, grey and many browns. In Taranaki and the South Island there is a bright blue one growing in association with beech and podocarps.

The banks on both sides of East Path, between MetService and the Cable Car entrance was a rich source, as was Gorse Path, 100 metres down from the Cable Car entrance. I found the white, wavy 250mm diameter mushrooms there, under the Californian redwood trees (*Sequoia sempervirens*) – very spectacular.



The Miller, *Clitopilus*, a very large 'mushroom'

Fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), the well-known red cap 'toadstool' is to be found on Pinehill Path where it would be expected, under *Pinus* trees.



Mushrooms (or toadstools) are divided into groups. Surprisingly the ones I found include examples from most groups:

Mushrooms – soft, fleshy, with distinctive cap and stem.

Boletes – similar but instead of gills have pores in the fleshy material under the cap.

Puffballs – spherical, usually with a small hole on top from where the spores escape.



Stinkhorns – the spore-producing tissue breaks down to foul-smelling slime that attracts flies for dispersal.



Stinkhorn *Aseroe rubra*

Corals and clubs – a single finger or club, or branched.

Jelly fungi – composed of hyphae in jelly-like material, can look like ears or tripe.



Jelly earfungus on a rotting tree stump

Woody brackets – usually on the side of a tree, strong and if broken, snap cleanly.

Leathery brackets – similar but break raggedly if folded.

(Info from *Photographic Guide to Mushrooms and other Fungi of New Zealand* by Geoff Ridley.).
Photos by Ros and Charmaine

Check out the Friends noticeboard for more of Ros's fantastic fungi fotos.

Spring Festival 2011

This year Spring Festival is an interesting mix of business as usual, forays down the road and tulip beds like you've never seen before.

There'll be weekday lunchtime concerts in Midland Park, featuring ukuleles, choirs, a couple of stunning New Zealand School of Music jazz groups and a kapa haka group who blew us away when they rehearsed in the Soundshell last year. This programme will be a challenge if the weather is unkind but we have to think the best when we organize these things!

The Reserve Bank Museum, Parliament and Walk Wellington are all getting into the spirit with special Festival tours, the zoo is coming out for a visit and the Cable Car will be busy shuttling our visitors between Lambton Quay and the Garden. We'll have gardener and musical icon

Dave Murphy entertaining on the Cable Car most lunchtimes too.

Spring Festival is part of Wellington's Rugby World Cup Carnivale programme and the star in the Garden will undoubtedly be the specially-themed tulip beds. This year the team have gone to a lot of trouble to plan and plant so that when the tulips and other flowers come out, we will see patterns of the national flags of countries playing in Wellington.

South Africa and Wales have been a challenge and the late-comer refugee game from Christchurch threw a curve, but we've come up with a way to make sure Scotland and Argentina don't miss out. The programme brochure will be on www.Wellington.govt.nz from early September.

Editor going out to pasture

I have been editor for over 10 years, about half the lifetime of the Friends as an organisation, (as I realised with great surprise when I read Helen McAndrew's article on the formation and early years of the Friends).

I am no longer able to afford the time to continue as editor and anyway, having stuck with the format I introduced at the start of my tenure, feel some new blood and fresh ideas wouldn't go amiss.

It seems fitting for several reasons, mainly the passing of Winsome, that we should have spent some time looking back in this, my last issue as editor – partly in tribute to those whose foresight has proved so helpful to the Botanic Garden, but because it's interesting and also inspirational in consideration of future plans.

We looked forward as well as backwards – with the report on the workshop to scope ideas and knowledge about bringing a teaching and/or childrens garden into the BG.

And on a lighter note, the soil is the most important part of any garden, so we dove into the dirt and had a look at some of the many, many forms of fungus that have been enjoying very favourable conditions this past autumn.

I have thoroughly enjoyed being your editor and working with the highly knowledgeable and helpful Friends and Garden staff who've given so much practical support for the newsletter over the years. I've been a Botanic Garden employee for the last three years and naturally that has

been hugely helpful – I get to use the photos that I take or commission while wearing my 'other hat' and of course, most of the time I know what's happening in the Garden, so don't have to pester too many people. As Spring and Rose Festival organiser I have been able to share hot-off-the press event info with you.

I will of course give every assistance to the new editor when he or she steps up.

Charmaine

Cuttings



The distinctive “pepper pot” variegated hollies near the Joy Fountain have had to be removed. At around 80 years old they have succumbed to the nasty fungus-like disease holly leaf blight, *Phytophthora ilicis*, and have been removed to try and protect the much older (140 years) holly hedge nearby. The big variegated holly above the Soundshell bank is gone too.

Interestingly the pepperpots' demise has opened up a couple of really good vistas, so there is a positive side to this sad end.

Long-time Botanic Garden librarian Elizabeth Clarke has retired. At her farewell she told us she had never had any intention of becoming a

librarian, her original passion being for dressmaking and teaching. She did both but as often happens ended up elsewhere – in the library world. Peter Tijssen will now look after the library.

And there is sometimes a funny side to other people's tragedies. Maria Smart in the gift shop got a call from somebody who wanted to buy ash plots. She had to ask the caller to repeat herself, and yes, she really had said ash plots, “for cremation, you know..”

Will need to let the call centre know that Jeff at the cemetery, not the Botanic Garden gift shop, sells the ash plots!

Coming Events

Sunday August 21, 11am

Captivating Camellias

Discover a variety of camellias on this 60-minute winter tour of our camellia garden. Meet at the Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street.

Monday August 22, 10.30am

Plants of Asia

Discover some of the Botanic Garden's plants from Asia and hear how their history and cultivation affect our lives today. Meet at the Founders' Entrance, Glenmore Street for this moderate 60-90 minute walk.

Spring Festival

17 September-2 October

Guided walks are included in the Festival. Download a programme from www.Wellington.govt.nz or pick up a brochure from your library.

Sunday 16 October, 11am

Walking in the Jurassic

...but without the dinosaurs. We look at ancient plants like the redwoods and our own kauri on this moderate 90-minute walk. Meet at the Cable Car entrance.

Monday October 24, 10.30am
Early flowering heritage roses

Discover the early flowering heritage roses in Bolton Street Memorial Park on this easy one hour walk. Meet at the Seddon Memorial entrance to BSMP.

Sun 20 November, 11am

Papyrus parchment & paper

Fascinating facts about the evolution of paper are revealed during this easy one-hour walk.

Hear about the emperor's toilet paper, the origin of money and more. Meet at the Duck Pond.

Rose Festival 25-27 November

Guided walks Sunday 27 November

11 am

The Lady Norwood Rose Garden

Welcome in the spring with a visit to the Lady Norwood Rose Garden. Meet at the Rose Garden fountain for this easy one-hour walk.

2pm

Old Roses and Tombstones

The Friends of Bolton Street Memorial Park and the Heritage Rose Society join forces for this easy one-hour walk. Meet at the Seddon Memorial entrance.

Monday 28 November, 10.30am

Joining the dots

What do pohutukawa, eucalypts and cloves have in common? Find out on this moderate 90-minute walk. Meet at the Cable Car entrance.



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