



## NZ Garden Trust Newsletter November 2015

### From Kerei Thompson, Chairman

#### What if you feel you can't open your garden?

It is important for garden owners to know that you can request your garden be temporarily 'noted' as closed on the NZGT website, or withdrawn for a period (depending on the time frame). Due to events outside your control or in fact ones you have planned like that amazing trip to visit all those English gardens.

The unexpected can happen; storm damage or severe climatic effects that have damaged your garden or extended illness are examples. The Trust does not wish to add to your stress during these times and we all want to ensure our visitors have the best experience.

If you find yourself in this position please contact your garden representative (Jill Simpson, South or Jenny Oakley, North) or Irene to discuss your circumstances so we can agree the best approach for you and your garden.

#### Amazing exposure for NZGT on Radio NZ

Thanks to some quick thinking and action from Irene, Penny Zino and Jill Simpson (who by great fortune was visiting Penny) spoke to Jesse (Afternoon's Radio NZ) on the 30<sup>th</sup> October.

This was really well done and came across extremely well promoting NZGT, considering they only had one hour to prepare it was a great effort and exposure for NZGT, thanks Irene, Penny and Jill.

Link below or search on Radio NZ website.

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/afternoons/audio/201776746/garden-stories>

#### NZGT Garden guide

You would have received the NZGT garden guide that we encourage you to have on display and hand out to your garden visitors; it is a great resource for garden visiting encouraging them to visit other trust gardens.

The garden guides along with our website are presently the two big areas of expenditure in our marketing budget. The trust for the last three years has spent \$10,000 to \$11,000 each year on marketing and advertising. The trustees regularly review this expenditure to ensure we are achieving the best effect in raising awareness of our member gardens and NZGT brand.

#### NZGT Accounts

For all those who would like to see a set of the NZGT accounts please contact Irene Collins and she will send you a copy.

#### Visitor Safety

With your guides you would have also received a suggested Health and safety sign to display at your entrance. Keeping our visitors safe is one of the most important parts of a great visitor experience. Please ensure you have reviewed your garden from a safety stand point, taking into account someone who does not know the garden like you, and may not be as able or steady on their feet.

Making people aware of the conditions; steep, uneven surfaces etc with signage and introduction (when meeting people) is a great place to start. Also ensure areas that are being worked on and present a potential hazard are roped off or made safe and let people know of these are in your introduction or signage.

## NZGT Conference in Akaroa April 14-17 2015

All information was in the last newsletter, please refer to that for accommodation.

Christchurch for the night of April 14, Akaroa is for 2 nights of April 15-16

Do remember it will be school holidays at that time so be in early as Akaroa is very popular.

All conference details will sent to you early December, there are wonderful gardens and really a great programme.

### From the editor

What an amazing spring, so cold for so long and then almost summer. The result has been unusual things all flowering together, almost chaos!

In this garden I have never had so many things flowering so late, daffodils and with a little moisture of sorts, went from being a few centimetres tall to the usual size in the matter of days, and suddenly flowers everywhere it was wonderful. Christchurch has never looked as beautiful, the flowering cherry *Prunus Yediensis* which have been much planted around the Botanic Garden Avenues were the best they have ever been. If ever there was something that lifts ones spirit at the end of a very long and cold winter it was that.

In this newsletter I want to emphasise the **importance of plants**. Sometimes the clever use of plants is pushed aside in favour of design. Gardeners that find new combinations of plants and their array of colours always interest me more than the rather stark modern designs which all too often are so predicable in their planting. Most of New Zealand enjoys a change of seasons with wonderful changes of colour and form in the planting world. For me the change of seasons is a huge part of the joy of living, we need to celebrate it more.

I hope the newsletters will revive an enthusiasm for the plant world which is always so absorbing. I would like anyone to share new ideas and plant knowledge, so the NZGT can become more than an assessing system, but 2 way exchange of ideas & love of plants between us all, promoting our gardens to the public, in a very professional way.

## Australian Landscape Conference in Melbourne

Robyn Kilty Margaret Barker and I set off for this and loved our few days. Melbourne was a buzz. Robyn and I visited Cranbourne Australian Botanic garden, which was amazing. For those who have not yet been there it is a very definite must if visiting Melbourne. Not easy access, but we managed the taxis and trains. The gardens are very large, a wonderful man made red desert & grey salt bushes complete with 130 meters of corteen steel sculpture where a man made river springs forth! **Australian plants only** and a real joy to explore, we had a whole day there and loved every moment.



For the conference itself. It is always interesting to explore the boundaries and dreams, maintaining and honouring our landscape. One can catch ones breath and restore ideas and re interpret others. Great gardens are like great art and great music which can transport you, and make you smile. Gardens are also always in translation, always changing, which is another challenge!

**Martin Rein Cano** made the wonderful comment, “The interesting thing about Australia is not the people **but the plants!**” Plants can change the world and so do humans but plants give us roots. When plants travel they become a hybrid because the surroundings are different. Creating your own mix of plants, which includes your own story, is part of the joy of it all.

**Phillip Johnson** was a master of creating natural rock pools which require no chemicals to keep them clean. He spent time looking for the spirit of the landscape being aware of atmosphere and light. The stones he used were huge placed by diggers but with that came the importance of connecting with nature. He was very keen on collecting water from roofs and using it in his pools to quieten & cool hot Aussie summers!

**Thomas Daxlads** came from Greece where there is an abundance of idyllic landscapes, legends, and writers. He described the Mediteranean people as social and plantings are often mixes intermingling with eachother, I liked the comparison! He spoke of the period where Greece went through great excesses (1990s), but now deep poverty, & with the strategy of limitation, he finds the best design solutions come from tight budgets! He felt it was never one designer’s ideas but a combination of ideas from the people that was important.

**Cao Perrot** from Los Angeles added real sparkle to the whole conference with his visions of using 800,000 crystals in man made clouds over a lake in Austria, a real wow factor!

I felt all the speakers were all interested in individuality, with a huge emphasis on growing what was indigenous to your area. In many ways I felt it was all almost too near the next swing of the pendulum, which was possibly the extreme end. An example was a huge tar sealed square within a city in Europe, and believe it or not red plastic paint covered all the tar seal and smooth surfaces! A few trees within the square **but no other plants.** Black and white lines within the square, which would be fine for skate boarders, but extreme for pedestrians trying to navigate a walk!

Another example in Southern France near the Mediteranean , no lawns, gravel pathways created from the rock in the area, planted accordingly, and somehow I wondered where children fit into all of this, gravel instead of lawns and little knees did not seem applicable! As the grandmother of 8 grandsons I relish the thought of large lawns and open spaces for children to let off steam. Perhaps it would be better to emphasize lawns **can be dry and brown** they always come back in the winter!

**We do have great garden events to take part in. The following is a run down on a few**

### **Powerco Taranaki Garden Festival: Jenny Oakley**

**The Powerco Taranaki Garden Spectacular** went very well. After such a rugged spring the weather gods treated us kindly apart from the southerly blast mid week when temperatures plummeted. Fortunately it blew out quickly and after a seasonal frost for some of us, the weather settled again for the final weekend. The visitor numbers were good with many groups from the South Island, the far north, and Australia. One couple I spoke to came from Finland! They had subscribed to the NZ House & Garden magazine seeing the Festival Advertisements.

We have unofficial results of a survey that

recorded 66% of visitors as being from outside Taranaki. When questioned, many people explained they had always known about the festival and decided this was the year to make the journey!

### Garden Marlborough: Carolyn Ferraby.

*There was a great article in November issue of the NZ Gardener on Carolyn's garden at Barewood with much talk about her very clever plantings.*

**Nelmac Garden Marlborough** was enjoyed as a very successful event with warm sunny, windless days throughout the Festival. Most of the garden tours & workshops were sold out with visitors from throughout New Zealand, and a pleasing numbers of tours and individuals from Australia.

Our international speaker this year was Anna Pavord from England, author of the well known books "The Tulip" and "The Naming of Names". Anna was a magical speaker with a **wonderful plant knowledge** and a special ability to enthuse all her listeners. The Event ended with a fun day in Seymore Square for the garden fete with lots of plant sales making for some very happy buyers.

Gardening is alive and well!

### Art in a Garden: Penny Zino

Art in a Garden has changed hands and is now owned and run by Laura Forbes, who rents Flaxmere garden. From my point of view a much better arrangement! Something that Kim Ellis said at the Wellington NZGT conference, "Never ever run an event in your garden just rent the space," wonderful advice!

We also were blessed with 3 fine days out of 4. Rain came on the first day which was such a joy after a very dry spring. **All my plants looked so much happier!** The garden looked its very best and such a wonderful backdrop to all the 75 talented sculptors and artists who exhibited here. It is always very humbling to see the enormous talent we have in our little country, so many

extremely clever people.

Laura achieved great sales and lots of people. Great music and a wonderful streamside café added to the days.



### Gordon Collier writes from Taupo

What is a garden? A friend recently said to me "I am a designer, you are a plantsman." I expect this was a back handed compliment but any good garden should surely have both elements. Regrettably the gulf nowadays between 'designers' and gardeners is clearly evident but is design to be divorced from planting? I think not. Instead we have 'Garden Design Conferences' and "Garden Design Walks" but never any conference or outing aimed at teaching about plants. The art of gardening has been dumbed down and though design is critical, it is time there was balance.

I like to think that the many people I have helped over the years have been pleased with the outcome; that they genuinely enjoy their garden, they like working in it, that it is more than just a routine Saturday morning job. Gardening is not just mowing the lawn (square or oblong,) trimming the edges where they lap over the railway sleepers and every six months raking the gravel, trimming the 'lolly pops' be they Portuguese laurel or the olive variety and if the spirit moves tidying beneath these self conscious billowing borders of heucheras;

gardens which in fact have all the charm of a dentist's waiting room.

Of course the designed garden has all the requirements and the space adjoining the house is of the correct ambience. My observation is that owners of 'designed' gardens whether for commercial reasons or for private satisfaction are not usually interested in gardening as such or have any particular plant knowledge or they wouldn't ask for this kind of help. They want something that looks really smart and requires the minimum of upkeep. Commercial properties spend big money on installing such proposals but invariably these are neglected there after though a good maintenance contract would take care of their investment. And have you ever seen a 'designed' garden that is not squared off, that is, informal? In all my travels around the country I have only seen only a handful.

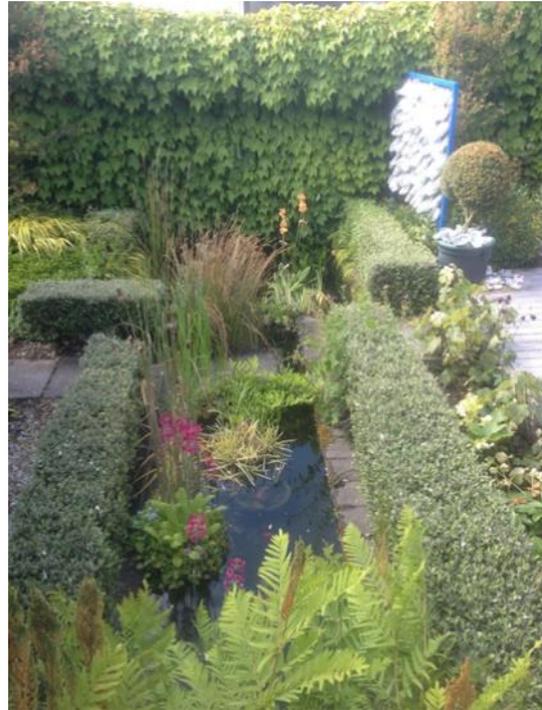
Surely the language of design and plants should be taught together – one without the other is incomplete. When I was learning about horticulture, there was an emphasis on plants, design was seldom mentioned. Sadly it is a fact that the reverse is true of institutions today. I do not need to look far afield to see the outcome: a senior lecturer counting grains of osmocote, grain by grain, into a planting hole, an otherwise worthy landscape architect planting very choice magnolias in the teeth of an often vicious gale whereas a little research would reveal that magnolias are woodland trees. These are just two instances that come to mind

It is true that many gardens, in the owners own words, "just happen." To refute my friend's judgment I designed my latest garden on paper long before the house was built, the whole divided by hedges with two formal pools and a pergola leading to a formal patio on which plants are displayed in containers. That's not all, there are two formal mixed borders and a further smaller formal area furnished with a single plant species. The remainder of the small area is informal but one space does lead into the next – granted the purist will declare there is no lawn (a pre-requisite?) and why is the vegetable garden on the street front instead of out the back? The design came first but once this garden was 'laid out' it was plants all the way, this method was good enough to have two of my gardens published in France.

Two of the best of known English gardens illustrate this fundamental principle: Hidcote Manor, an enormously influential Gloucestershire garden where the strict architectural lines are blurred by exuberant planting and Sissinghurst Castle, in Kent, where the rigid outlines of the garden imposed by the ancient buildings are over taken by a profusion of plants which are even encouraged to blur the margins of the design. These are two of the gardens the National Trust's visitors flock to see. Likewise Beth Chatto's garden in Essex, an informal paradise, is said to be the one garden in England New Zealanders should visit.

My garden does have design, interesting plants and plant combinations; I am pleased to relate though in some eyes it may have 'acne' it doesn't look as if it is on steroids either. Thankfully plants now have the upper hand.

Gordon Collier



**Book now accommodation at the conference & Happy Gardening from us all**

**Penny Zino**