



## NZ Garden Trust Newsletter January 2016

A very happy New Year to you all.

This newsletter is going to be quite factual. The main purpose is to include all the information for the conference in Akaroa which Jill Simpson and her team have been compiling. We have decided the conference information will be in pdf form alongside the newsletter so you can all print it yourselves and bring it to conference. I am also including a note from the assessors for you all to understand what is involved with the assessment process. The website analytics is also helpful in understanding the progress of the Trust website over the last 2 years with our small advertising dollar

### A note from our Chairman

Dear Members,

Happy New Year and I do hope you had an enjoyable Christmas and holiday period, & managed to have some time away from your gardens, I know we all love gardening but having some time away is often the best way to help our gardens.

A busy run into Christmas with the assessors working hard to finalize their assessments marks to enable Irene to get the results out to everyone before Christmas. This does work well and certainly shortens the time between assessment and everyone receiving their results.

Jill & Richard & the conference team have been working hard to finalize details for our April conference, this has now been completed and Penny has included full details.

Like all our conferences this will be another inspiring long weekend, I do encourage everyone to attend. These weekends are fantastic a wonderful way to refresh and get some new ideas or confirm some old ones. The combination

of garden visiting and presentations is one of the best formats I know of, in fact it is the conference of choice for our gardening team at Bark.

This is an opportunity for you to spend four days with other like minded gardeners catching up and discussing gardening; what could be better?

The conference is also our best time as an organization and group to discuss our progress and plan our future path. The open and frank discussion we have each year and the potential benefits that can arise from this feedback is very beneficial to the Trust so please bring your ideas and thoughts.

I look forward to seeing lots of you in Christchurch in April.

Happy gardening

Kerei

**From the Assessors** The 2015 assessment round is over... Of course it is a privilege and pleasure to visit your gardens again and we are all continually amazed by the creativity and passion of our gardeners and the increasingly high standards set by not only the gardens of international significance but also an increasingly large number of gardens of national significance.

I am always a bit depressed after a round of assessing. I come home to my own unfinished planting, weedy vegetable patch, box blight and the odd dead plant that didn't get replaced through the winter. However my soul is usually recharged, I have lots of lovely photographs and I resolve to "do better"

So how – you might well ask, did we get to be assessors and what skills do we have to assess your gardens. Initially you

were assessed entirely by your peers, Bev McConnell and Gordon Collier – world renown for the quality of their own gardens, well-travelled, artistic, and creative and both with an extraordinary level of horticultural knowledge. How to replace them?

After 13 years of doing this, I know we can't be compared but I do think we assessors collectively have the skills and knowledge required to assess your gardens. There are now 8 of us - four who have design backgrounds and four with backgrounds in horticulture. We travel in pairs - a designer paired with a horticulturalist and we try and visit a different area each year. Most of us regularly visit gardens of significance overseas. Some of us have now seen most of the gardens throughout the country so we can compare apples with apples.

Renee and I have both run the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects Award programmes, have judged for them; I helped set up the judging system at the Ellerslie Flower show, we both judged at the show, we both taught at universities although I have to admit that my tutoring role for Dip Hort at Lincoln does not compare with Renee's role as Head of Landscape Architecture at Unitec, and of course we have both designed gardens as part of our career paths. Renee judges the LIANZ awards every year and also judges environmental awards throughout the country.

Karen was a well-known garden designer in Auckland before she took on the role of managing Eden Gardens. She is of course famous for her multitude of gold medal winning show gardens at Ellerslie and in Japan. She was the efficient and respected liaison between management and designers at Ellerslie for years and she also judged every year at Ellerslie and in Christchurch. She continues to keep her hand in with design.

Rob Watson's career has focused on garden design and he has been responsible for a designing a large number of new gardens such as Broadfields as well as refurbishing old gardens for 21<sup>st</sup> century use. Rob has taught at Lincoln and teaching highlights why design works or does not work.

Most Landscape Architects don't have a huge horticultural knowledge so we don't do detailed planting design well. So we need people like Carolyn Ferraby who is sadly hanging up her shingle. She of course owns Barewood, that iconic country garden in Marlborough and her sage observations about why a garden is or is not working are valued by us all.

Pauline Murphy is another with vast horticultural experience. She spent some time working and learning at the knee of Gordon Collier at Titoki Point. She is a gardener with a huge horticultural knowledge but she brings a designers eye and a pragmatic approach to her assessing.

Kerei Thompson is of course is the owner of Bark, the Landscape Management company tasked with caring for the most important of gardens in the country, including Government house, Auckland & Wellington and of course Arylies and for keeping them in the absolutely perfect state that dignitaries and being a garden of International significance demands. He has made all of us aware of lawns and edges but it is his pragmatic approach to solving problems in the garden that I particularly value.

Our newest recruit, Dylan Norfield works at the Dunedin Botanic Gardens. He has been a bit of revelation to us older assessors as he brings huge horticultural knowledge to the assessing process but he is also showing a keen eye for the niceties of design. He also understands the subtle differences between public and private gardens and the qualities that make some of them special.

### ***So what do we do?***

We are of course volunteers, although we get recompensed for our travelling expenses when we go assessing. Each year we are given the list of gardens to be assessed sometime in August or early September. I as the current chief assessment organiser, split the country up into chunks of territory doable over a period of 2 – or 3 long days. I then ask who wants to go where and allocate each person territory dependant on their response – if I can. The captain of each pair of assessors has to book flights, accommodation and transport, organise the itinerary and contact the garden owners with an estimated time of the visit. This year we were a bit off the eight ball and some of you were not contacted in a timely manner and for that we apologise. We will try harder next year!

We usually do a minimum of two regions each and the combined visits take 3 to 5 days in total. However sometimes we have to go to great lengths to assess a region. This year Karen and Renee flew to Dunedin, visited old and new gardens, drove to Gore and Invercargill to visit a swathe of parks before driving up to Queenstown for the next night. They then visited a garden in Wanaka before flying out. Being Jaffa's they almost missed the plane as had to take the long way round back to Queenstown because they missed the turnoff to drive over the Crown Range. A tough assignment!

We female assessors also usually indulge in a bit of antique and junk shop shopping throughout the country on our journeys. My best find was a replacement copy of *Trees for the New Zealand Countryside* by John and Bunny Mortimer - purchased for an exorbitant price from an antiquarian books leer / antique dealer in Oamaru. There is also a man who makes authentic shrugs in Oamaru!

Kerei is not enthusiastic about shopping but he does value a good feed!

This year we thought the process revealed some common highlights.

The outstanding gardens we visited were truly outstanding. They had strongly articulated spaces, a clear and logical circulation route through the garden and the visitor was exposed to an ever-changing variety of different spatial and aesthetic experiences. We also enjoyed gardens where the collections of plants were the highlight with spectacular rhododendron flowers competing with a male peacock in full tail for our attention at Benneydale – Thankyou Doff. Standards of maintenance, particularly around the buildings was meticulous and special plants and garden art are being used to great effect. New gardens also surprised us with their original creativity and of course we are always happy visit some gardens that are just nice places to be in.

At the end of each of these amazing trips we individually fill in the assessment form. We then combine the totals agreeing on a mark for each of the criteria and add them up to get a total. Finally we look at the mark we come up with see if it is consistent with our impression of the garden as a whole. This year I personally rated the gardens I had visited 1 – 16 to make sure the marks were consistent with the impressions I got – and they were!

While we try to keep your marks consistent, individually we assessing pairs often see different attributes or problem areas so the marks may vary slightly from year to year. We are asked to promote or defend our individual assessment mark and this leads to some vigorous debate at our ratification meetings. Having said that our combined experience and backgrounds result in us being remarkably consistent.

Finally some unsolicited advice:

- Please, please resist the desire to expand your garden beyond your capacity to manage it. Some lovely gardens are being spoiled because your expansion plans mean that the old garden is not being maintained at a the level it deserves. Being a member of the NZGT means that your garden should be maintained to a consistent high standard. Weedy areas under development are of little value to your visitors.
- If a plant species works repeat it – again and again - big swathes of single species of ground covers or a single species of trees or them of trees are such a unifying factor and Liz Morrows garden Omaio is a case in point. Her garden is set in the bush, she uses swathes of single species in her beds and she punctuates them with carefully shaped and clipped vegetative focal points.
- The whole garden needs to achieve a consistent standard of excellence. This means that all of the garden beds should be well planted, edges should be trimmed, beds should be almost completely weed free (we forgive that

occasional mature dandelion) and beds should preferably be mulched. Grass gone to seed and rampant invasive weed species through garden beds detract from garden quality.

- Stop struggling with areas that don't support healthy plant growth and start again. Using a bulldozer for a couple of hours to adjust the landform rather than struggling with that steep clay bank will often solve a recurring problem
- You don't have to mow all of the grass in the areas you want people to visit. Its OK to have a mown path through long grass to a feaure and its Ok to see long grass cut as for hay.
- If you open to the public your garden should be safe and meet the minimum OSH requirements. Pools should be fenced, and ponds should be safe. A particular bug bear of mine is steps. Step risers should be a maximum of 180mm and a minimum of 100mm and the tread should be adjusted to reflect riser height (twice the riser plus the tread should equal 650 to 680 mm) Tread width outside should be generous. All tread risers in a step run should all be exactly the same height. Slopes where people walk should be no more than 1: 8. Put steps in if you get steeper but remember that a single step is likely to get tripped over. Steps and slopes should be comfortable to walk across. (I broke my leg years ago on a set of steps that had uneven risers)
- Breaking old rules is good – most new design ideas break some rules, but if they
- are good they will stand out for their unique qualities. We saw gardens this year that break rules and were innovative and different but we also have lots of lovely gardens that are traditional in their style and planting and they provide a beautiful respite or experience for the visitor.

The purposes of the The Trust is to identify the quality of the gardens in New Zealand so both domestic and international tourists who visit should be assured of getting the experience they expected. The Trust is also committed to helping you raise the standards of presentation, design and plantsman ship through its publications and conferences. If you are not familiar with the standards expected, we suggest you visit some of the internationally and nationally significant gardens in your area. And finally, if you make alterations to your garden, or you have an act of God (storm earthquake or fire) which will affect the enjoyment of your visitors then let us know and we can change the web site to reflect your circumstances.

*Jan, Kerei, Pauline, Carolyn, Dylan, Karen and Renee*

The most recent assessment results have been completed and we welcome the following new members to the New Zealand Gardens Trust.

The following gardens have been upgraded during the re-assessment

<b>New Gardens</b>			
Angrason Gardens	5 Star	Graham & Ann Thomson	Te Toro, Waiuku, Auckland
Monto Garden	5 Star	David Monks & Juergen Tofahrm	Kerikeri, Northland
Orokonui Ecosanctuary	5 Star	Otago Natural History Trust	Waitoi, Dunedin
Addenbrooke	4 Star	Graeme & Jane Thomas	Bombay, Auckland
Casa Rossa	4 Star	Chris Allen & Mel Haskell	West Melton, Christchurch
King Edward Park	4 Star	South Taranaki District Council	Hawera, Taranaki
Amberley House	3 Star	Andy & Angie Mason	Amberley, Canterbury
Aston Norwood Gardens	3 Star	Mark and Fiona Rammell	Upper Hutt, Wellington
Coldstream Victorian Gardens	3 Star	Rupert Ward	Rangiora, Canterbury
<b>Upgraded Gardens</b>			
Broadfield NZ Landscape Garden	6 Star	David Hobbs	Canterbury
Gore Public Gardens	5 Star	Gore Public Gardens	Gore
Parkwood	5 Star	Ailsa & Carey Sanson	Otorohanga
Kaipara Coast Sculpture Gardens	4 Star	David Bayly	North Auckland
Chatswood Country Gardens	4 Star	Bruce & Sandra Wilson	Palmerston North
Tullamore	4 Star	Lynda Peat & Tim Birdsall	Taupo
Eden Garden	4 Star	Peter & Bobbie Martin	Motueka

### **New Zealand Gardens Trust - Website Analytics - 2014 & 2015**

	sessions	new ses- sions %	users	new visitor %	return visitor %	page views	pages/ session	avg duration (min.sec)	Bounce %	previous year com- pared
2014										
Jan	1654	71.46	1299	28.5	71.5	7387	4.47	3:41	47.52	
Feb	1506	71.38	1199	28.6	71.4	6431	4.27	3:17	50.46	
Mar	1744	74.38	1425	25.2	74.8	5320	3.05	2:20	59.35	
Apr	1595	76.68	1337	23.3	76.7	4691	2.94	2:13	60.88	
May	1556	78.79	1320	21.2	78.8	5322	3.42	2:23	61.31	
Jun	1293	78.19	1096	21.8	78.2	4251	3.29	2:19	59.32	
Jul	1410	81.28	1238	18.7	81.3	4216	2.99	2:07	62.62	
Aug	1833	77.69	1550	22.3	77.7	6021	3.28	2:46	60.88	
Sep	2013	76.4	1689	23.6	76.4	7690	3.82	3:02	59.86	
Oct	2535	76.73	2092	23.3	78.7	8610	3.4	2:29	61.78	
Nov	2638	74.91	2175	26.1	74.9	7708	2.92	2:21	64.06	
Dec	2259	74.37	1835	25.6	74.4	6789	3.01	2:36	61.44	
2015										
Jan	3099	75.84	2465	24.2	75.8	9912	3.29	2:19	63.08	187%
Feb	2890	75.16	2354	24.8	75.2	8167	2.83	2:05	64.81	192%
Mar	2739	78.28	2306	21.7	78.3	6383	2.5	1:46	68.6	157%
Apr	2412	81.43	2094	18.5	81.5	6362	2.64	1:59	67.87	151%
May	2328	82.39	2052	17.6	82.4	5463	2.35	1:38	69.29	150%
Jun	3414	82.25	2947	17.6	82.4	7798	2.28	1:27	70.47	264%
Jul	2507	75.55	2062	24.4	75.5	6220	2.48	1:39	69.72	178%
Aug	2597	75.43	2113	24.5	75.5	6725	2.59	2:03	65.27	142%
Sep	1753	79.75	1515	20.2	79.8	4600	2.62	1:46	67.48	87%

Nil Analytics for Oct – Dec due to Website Upgrade to mobile application

Dear Irene

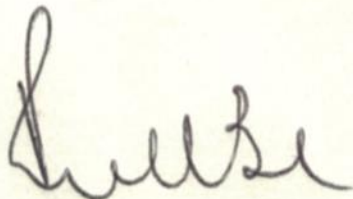
My husband Paul and I have recently returned from a fabulous holiday visiting New Zealand during the course of which we made a special point of visiting gardens throughout our journey.

We both wanted to write to you and the New Zealand gardens Trust to express our thanks for the wonderful welcome we received from your Gardens Trust members. Early on in the visit we were delighted to pick up the blue guide leaflet which was a real benefit to us in tailoring our journey to take in as many gardens as possible.

We were unfailingly met with a real welcome, warmth, knowledge and kindness from all your members as we booked our visits along the course of our journey. Many owners were so generous with their time and so friendly to us that it was a real pleasure to visit their wonderful garden spaces. We were very touched by the dedication and love of gardening we encountered.

We would like to extend our own warm welcome to any of your members should you be visiting the UK in future and would be very keen to work collaboratively with the Trust to try and promote each other in the future should this be a possibility .

Yours sincerely  
Pauline and Paul McBride



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All this information is food for thought.

We are all looking forward to seeing you in Akaroa

Penny Zino