

# FERNGLEN NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2016-2017



## Contents

1. Committee update
2. Exploring Mt Donald McLean
3. Book Review: Tramping: A New Zealand History by Shaun Barnett and Chris McLean
4. A look at some unusual climbers –The Bush Lawyers
5. New Zealand natives thriving in Ireland
6. Pohutukawa bloom late November

Many thanks to committee member Nev Arbury for writing the Fernglen newsletter.

## **1. Fernglen Garden's committee update**

Unfortunately due to council regulations and changes in personnel, the contract for Malcolm Fisher as curator has been suspended for the past 5 months much to the detriment of Fernglen Gardens. As a result we do not have a curators report again. Subsequent to the AGM of the Management committee on December 13<sup>th</sup> Kelly Hayward contacted council once more, and has an assurance that, thankfully, the contract will be reinstated by Christmas. Many thanks to the committee members who have been volunteering to maintain some of the more vulnerable plants.

**Committee members:** Nev Arbury, Malcolm Fisher, Dennis Worley, Kelly Hayward, Barry Brown, Steve Cook, Rosemarie Bold, Jill Sye, Chris Webb. New members welcomed are Andrea Hartmann, Marcus Sprangan, and Brian Cumber.

**Elected offices:** Steve Cook as Chairperson, Kelly Hayward as Treasurer, and Jill Sye as secretary.

### **Projects**

Fernglen would appreciate as much publicity as possible and Nev and Marcus will be working over the next 2 months to increase the profile of the Gardens on-line and in the media.

Developing the gardens is big priority and we look forward to working with the council to develop the former site of Muriel's house.

Working Bees and Open Days continue to be held in April and October each year. We would like as many as possible to attend and appreciate the support we have received this year.

### **Open Day October 30<sup>th</sup> 2016**

Fernglen Garden's management committee would like to thank the Kaipatiki Project and the Kaipatiki Board for including Fernglen in the program for the Ecofest Kaipatiki that ran from 28<sup>th</sup> October to 6<sup>th</sup> November. Ecofest events included workshops on composting, eco-design, and edible plants, to bike rides, walks, and an eco-quiz. Fernglen's contribution was a successful Open Day with a guided tour of the gardens and morning tea. Knowledgeable curator Malcolm and committee member Nev, impressed visitors with the scale and scope of the native plant collection. Highlights for visitors included; the Parataniwha Glade, the Fernery, *Coprosma* collection, and the rapidly growing kauri at Ben's Ridge. Favourable comments about the labels were a timely reminder of the need to continue to label our expanding collection.

We look forward to continuing collaboration with the Kaipatiki group including the Kaipatiki Community Facilities Trust, who recently included Muriel Fisher Reserve in their monthly summer walks with Judy Barfoot on December 18<sup>th</sup>. We continue to support The Kaipatiki Restoration Network in the Pest Free Kaipatiki strategy. We look forward to participating in the Kaipatiki Festival which will be held on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

## 2. Exploring Mt Donald McLean

Mt Donald McLean Road is a gravel side road off Whatipu Road just past little Huia. The 390m mountain is named after the controversial Donald McLean, Chief Land Purchase Commissioner for the crown at the time of the acquisition of the Waitakere Ranges in 1853, from Ngati Whatua, Akitai, and Ngati Te Ata.

This botanically interesting area is a comparatively easy walk up a well maintained track. A number of lesser known native plant species can be observed in a relatively small area. These include *Hebe bishopiana* which only grow in selected parts of the Waitakere Ranges. Fine specimens of *Aleuosmia macrophylla* (toropapa) which flower in August- September with scented red blooms, and appear to be growing in clay. The lesser known *Corokia buddleioides* (Korokio), Hall's totara *Podocarpus hallii* (also sometimes called *Podocarpus cunninghamii*), *Phyllocladus toatoa* and it's more common relative *Phyllocladus trichomanoides*- tanekaha, Native brooms- *Carmichaelia*, are abundant on the side of the track leading to the summit. *Carmichaelia aligera*, *Carmichaelia odorata*, *Carmichaelia australis* (makaka) have been noted in previous surveys of the area by the Auckland Botanical Society. There are also a thriving colony of carnivorous kauri snails introduced from Northland over 50 years ago.



*Aleuosmia macrophylla* (toropapa)

The summit affords a spectacular view over the Manukau Heads and locals claim that on a clear day the view can extend as far south as Mount Taranaki.



Photographer Mike Bayly Veronica bishopiana taken at Mt Donald Mclean courtesy NZPCN



Carmichaelia odorata Photographer John Barkla courtesy NZPCN

### 3. Book Review *Tramping: A New Zealand History* by Shaun Barnett and Chris Mclean

# TRAMPING

— A NEW ZEALAND HISTORY —



SHAUN BARNETT & CHRIS MACLEAN

For those with a shared passion for tramping and native plants, this is a stunningly illustrated and superbly researched tome. At 2.5kg though this is not a book for your backpack! In thirteen chapters it covers the history, politics, sociology, and technicality of tramping. Historically, the terrain of New Zealand meant that tramping through the bush and seafaring were the only means of traversing the country. Maori, then missionaries and early European explorers, walked long distances and often with heavy loads, and by necessity. The book includes details such as the maps and dates of the trips of nineteenth century botanists such as Colenso, Bidwell, Hector, Travers, and Dieffenbach, highlighting how hardy the early collectors of New Zealand native plants were.

Illustrations include reproductions of early maps alongside historical photographs of historical trampers. The development of tramping for recreation and tourism in the early twentieth century, along with the construction of crude huts is also described. A detailed history of the emergence of tramping clubs in major cities includes the Tararua Tramping Club of Wellington. Tararua was the first club to use the term “tramping” in its name. Muriel Fisher was a member of this club in the tramping craze of the 1930’s. Examples are cited of women being on a more equal footing during tramping activities than in everyday society. This was at a time when men and women in joint recreation was very improper. Tramping clubs were a hearty introduction to the joys of walking in the great outdoors. Often building and maintaining tracks and huts was part of their dedication.

Chapters covering National Parks, The Great Walks and the role of the Department of Conservation, include a critical analysis of the sustainability and capacity in maintaining and administering vast areas of New Zealand for an increasing population of users. Correlations are drawn between trends within New Zealand, the rest of the world. USA’s National Parks movement played a role in the formation and protection of parks in New Zealand. International protest movements encouraged people in New Zealand to realise that they could influence government policy. For example, by protesting for access rights to the Milford Track in the 1960s.

This book is another gem from Craig Potton Publishing who continue to produce quality reference books on many aspects of the natural world of New Zealand.

#### 4. A look at some unusual climbers the “Bush lawyers”

The bush lawyer tātarāmoa in Māori, is a scrambling vine native to New Zealand. A strange climber it is usually found on bush margins. The colloquial English name is often said to describe how once this thorny plant becomes attached to you, it will not let you go until it has drawn blood. The species *Rubus* includes introduced species such as blackberry. There are 5 species of native bush lawyer:

*Rubus australis*: A vigorous climber with distinct juvenile and adult leaflets. Distinguished from other bush lawyers by scented flowers, round leaves and yellow berries. It is distributed throughout New Zealand



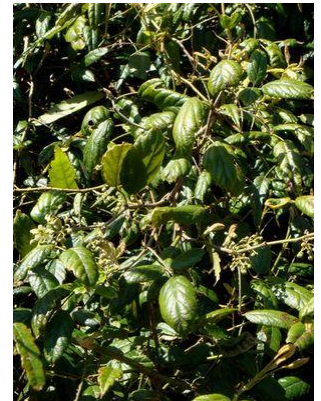
*Rubus australis*  
Photographer Jeremy Rolfe  
courtesy NZPCN

*Rubus cissoides*: This strong growing climber can reach up to 15 metres in height it often develops a multi-branched habit. It is identified by toothed hairless leaves, white flowers, and red and orange berries. It is distributed throughout New Zealand



*Rubus cissoides* Nick Singers  
photographer courtesy NZPCN

*Rubus schmidelioides*: Where unsupported by surrounding plants they can form a dense bush or grow to 10 metres. The prickles are red, on compound, usually three leaflet, dark to bronze green leaves, undersides have whitish tomentum. Flowers are whitish panicles and fruits yellow or orange. Also distributed throughout New Zealand



*Rubus schmidelioides*  
Photographer Jeremy Rolfe NZPCN

*Rubus squarrosus*: Extremely prickly usually leafless (or nearly so) scrambling vine. Covered in conspicuous yellow prickles. Leaves usually much-reduced (sometimes absent). Flowers white, in panicles up to 200 mm long. Fruit red to red-orange. Found in North and South Islands, and with the exception of Northland mainly easterly.



*Rubus squarrosus* photographer Jeremy Rolfe NZPCN



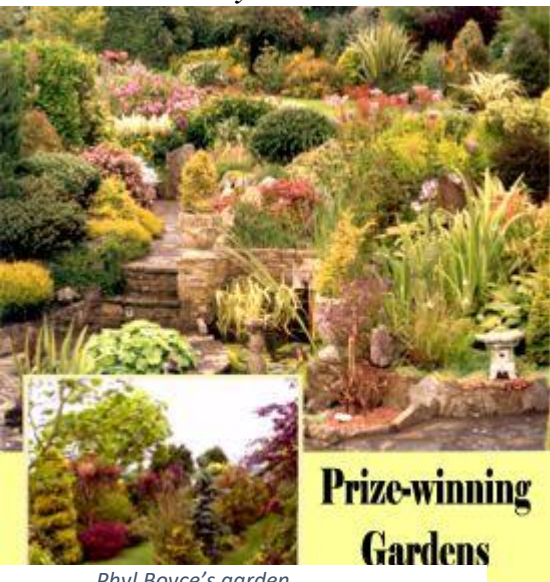
*Rubus parvus* photograph Jeremy Rolfe  
NZPCN

*Rubus parvus* Leaves mostly solitary, narrow, margins deeply toothed, dark bronze-green to red-green above. Flowers white, usually solitary, occasional in few-flowered sprays. Fruit a large, red berry. Found in the South Island only.

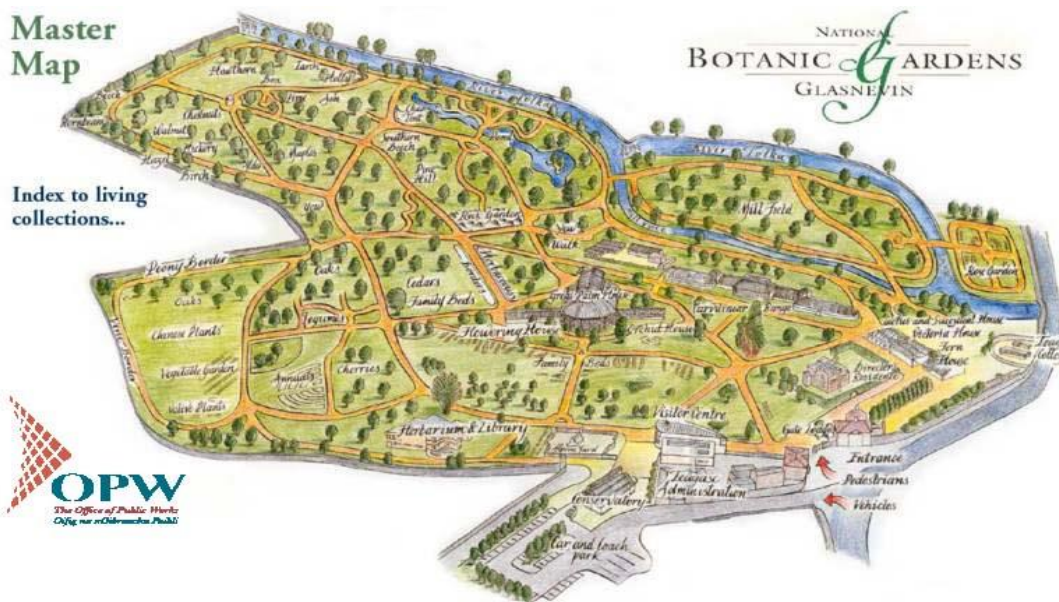
## 5. New Zealand native plants thriving in Ireland

Chris Webb long term Fernglen management committee member had a fantastic twelve day tour of the Emerald Isles in June this year. On seeing New Zealand plants on his travels he felt “right at home.” *Cordyline australis* (cabbage tree) and *Griselinia littoralis* (kapuka) grow in abundance and seed prolifically. On visiting Garnish Island, New Zealand plants he noted growing included; *Agathis australis*/ kauri, *Phyllocladus trichomanoides* /tanekaha, *arthropodium*/rengarenga lily, *Metrosideros excelsa* /pohutukawa, *Cyathea dealbata*/ ponga and *Cordyline australis*. Bernard O’Leary met Chris at gardens in County Wexford that

housed lovely specimens of *Cordyline indivisa*/ mountain cabbage tree. Phyl Boyce, the author of a weekly gardening article for the Limerick Leader, hosted Chris at her County Kerry garden. A garden that included mature specimens of *Clianthus*/kakabeak, *Sophora microphylla*/ kowhai, *Phormium tenum* /harakeke/flax, and *Myosotidium hortensia* /Chatham Island Forget-me-nots. The National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin boast an impressive New Zealand border that includes 130 year old New Zealand *Northofagus*-beech trees. Helen Dillon’s amazing town garden in Dublin displayed several *Celmisias*/mountain daisy, Chatham Island Forget-me-nots and a *Cordyline*. Chris certainly appreciated that the Irish love New Zealand plants and are warm hosts.



Phyl Boyce’s garden



## 6. Pohutukawa Bloom late November 2016

Each Christmas Nev traditionally reports on the state of the bloom of Pohutukawa. The New Zealand native “Christmas tree” that self-decorates in glorious blooms, generally flowers November, and finishes flowering between Christmas and New Year. Last year Nev noted very early flowering which meant that many trees had shed their flowers before Christmas. This year Nev can confirm the New Zealand Herald report on November 18<sup>th</sup> that the pohutukawa flowers are “right on time”. Professor Paula Jameson of Canterbury University, refutes the myth that pohutukawa early flowering predicts a long hot summer. Rather than predicting the future, trees more often reflect what has happened to them in an earlier season. This year beach areas such as Mt Maunganui and Takapuna, are lined with blooming trees.

By the last week in November this year Tamaki Drive had some trees in full flower, but some showed no sign of flowering. Strangely some of the most prolific flowering were very old or very young trees, and some very misshapen specimens. The non-flowering trees appeared to have masses of new vegetative growth but minimal flowers. A mild winter plus wet spring and early summer may have been too gentle to provide the stress to stimulate great flowering. Big old trees have a high wood to foliage ratio which means lots of wood supported by limited foliage. Young trees have a low wood to foliage ratio – a lot more foliage relative to wood. Chop back a large tree and it reverts to sprouting like a teenager.

A plant grown from seed has more genetic variation than a clone and it may have vegetative growth every year and fail to form flower buds. Nursery cultivars are unlikely to be bred if genetically non-flowering, so failure to bloom is more likely to be related to the plant’s environment for example, toxins or possums. The ability of the species to switch between vegetative growth and flower bud formation makes long periods of non-flowering a possibility. Trees in a group may flower at different times over summer, giving the appearance of two flushes of blooms, yet individual trees in the group would only flower once. However, some hybrids do flower twice a season.

The Project Crimson Conservation Trust, set up in 1990, protects the pohutukawa and the rata tree. They recommend pohutukawa and rata grow to become huge trees, which can cause problems if planted on small suburban sections, or near fences or other structures on farm land. The location of underground drains and water pipes also needs to be taken into account. Before planting, check to ensure the species you select is ecologically correct for your area. Interestingly, pohutukawa has become an exotic pest in South Africa. Also, bear in mind that pohutukawa can hybridise with Northern rata so plant well away from any natural stands of Northern rata. The best time to plant is in autumn and early winter when the ground is still warm and there is likely to be good rainfall. Spring may be a safer time if the planting site is prone to frost. Nev planted some young specimens of this hardy tree on sand dunes at Mangawai Heads in 2015, which are surviving and growing. The hope is that in 30 years they will enhance the beauty of summer and provide shade, shelter, and a place to climb for his great grandchildren and other beachgoers.