

The Botanic Garden

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A Newsletter for the Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand
Issue no. 9 – July 2004

Table of Contents

• Editorial	1
• Meetings and Conferences	3
• People	3
• Historic meeting between Heads of Australian and NZ Garden	4
• NSW Regional Botanic Gardens Conference report	7
• New Nursery for ANBG	9
• 150th anniversary Adelaide Botanic Garden upgrade	10
• Feature Article – Eastwoodhill Arboretum, New Zealand	11

Editorial

Bganz is Sprouting!

A promising new seedling emerged in Canberra on 6 April 2004. On that day BGANZ - Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand – was legally incorporated as an association. For the first time, botanic gardens on both sides of the Tasman have an organisation specifically dedicated to representing and promoting their interests. The value of having such an organisation has been recognised for some time, and the establishment of BGANZ is the result of much work by the Council of Heads of Australian Botanic Gardens (CHABG), and especially by Virginia Berger, CHABG's secretary.

In a practical sense, BGANZ first poked its head above ground with the production of this newsletter, *The Botanic Garden*, and the holding of the inaugural BGANZ Congress in Geelong last October. But now the really exciting stage has arrived – the benefits of having BGANZ might be generally accepted, but it's much less clear what we in the botanic gardens fraternity actually want BGANZ to be and do. So, now is your chance to help nurture BGANZ's development into a thriving and sturdy tree.

BGANZ had to have a constitution in order to become incorporated. This document was prepared by CHABG bearing in mind the responses from the plenary discussion held at the National Botanic Gardens Conference in Canberra in 2001 and also with the goal of not constraining the future activities of the association. The goals of BGANZ are therefore stated in its constitution as being:

- To be the chief body representing interests of botanic gardens in Australia and New Zealand;
- To promote the interests and activities of Australian and New Zealand botanic gardens;
- To enhance the state of botanic gardens for the benefit of the community.

CHABG believes BGANZ should be an inclusive association that is relevant to botanic gardens of all sizes, histories and aspirations, wherever they are located in New Zealand and Australia. Accordingly "botanic garden" is

broadly defined – as a place open to the public and which grows plants for public enjoyment, scientific, horticultural, conservation or educational purposes, and which has local, national or international roles.

So far CHABG, with input from several other Australasian botanic gardens, has been responsible for BGANZ's development. Now the members of CHABG are keen to be assisted by others to ensure that the next stages of development are more broadly based. We propose launching BGANZ at the next Congress, which will be held in Hobart in October 2005. There's much work to be done before then to decide how BGANZ could operate most effectively and what its priorities should be during the next 3-5 years.

Botanic gardens in Australia and New Zealand have much in common – they are loved by their communities, have expert and passionate staff, well-established collections, great recreational and heritage values, a desire to contribute to conserving biodiversity (locally or nationally), and successful educational and visitor programs. We also face many similar problems - insufficient resources, changing community expectations of botanic gardens, ageing infrastructure and collections, impacts from planning decisions on neighbouring lands, generally low media and political profiles, and few support networks with other gardens in our regions. BGANZ has the potential to consolidate our strengths and limit our weaknesses.

The primary and continuing role of BGANZ should be to act as the umbrella organisation for Australasian botanic gardens. In fulfilling that role it could become many things – indeed, expectations will almost certainly exceed the ability to deliver them! BGANZ could facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experiences and programs through regional and national meetings, and through The Botanic Garden. It could develop frameworks against which standards and “best practice” performance can be measured. It could provide co-ordination for training, professional development and staff exchanges/secondments. It could be the vehicle for a collectively stronger clout and advocacy

in the community, reinforcing the significance of botanic gardens. It could be all these things together, and more. What, though, are the most important priorities for BGANZ in its next few years?

This is where you come in. A trans-Tasman CHABG working group, also involving regional gardens representation, is soon to begin preparing a draft three-year business plan for BGANZ that will incorporate the consensus (hopefully!) of comments on priorities and programs received from botanic gardens and their staff and supporters. This plan will also deal with issues requiring further resolution in BGANZ's constitution, such as who will be members (gardens corporately? individuals? both?), how the governing committee will be elected (is it a national committee? does it have regionally elected representatives? how long are they elected for?), and what levels of membership fees will be set.

CHABG needs your ideas about the activities and the top three priorities of BGANZ for the period 2005-08. If we don't hear from the constituency, it's very hard to make BGANZ representative of Australian and New Zealand botanic gardens.

Please write or email before 17 September 2004 to: CHABG Secretariat, GPO Box 1777, Canberra, ACT 2601; or vberger@deh.gov.au.

Be part of BGANZ's future. Contribute your ideas!

Philip Moors
Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne



Philip Moors and Robin Nielsen sign the application to incorporate BGANZ - March 2004

Meetings and Conferences

BGANZ Congress 2005 – Advance notice

Following on from the highly successful Congress held last October in Geelong, the second Congress to be held by Botanic Gardens Australia New Zealand will be held in Tasmania in October 2005, the conference venue being the Hotel Grand Chancellor on Hobart's historic water front. The theme of this Congress is "Botanic Gardens: Environmental Cost or Benefit".

An organising Committee has been formed and is currently working on preparing a program and interim papers for this event.

The four topic streams and Stream Co-ordinators are:

Collections and Science

(Robin Nielsen: robin.nielsen@ea.gov.au)

Environmental Education

(John Schutz: schutz.john@saugov.sa.gov.au)

Sustainable Horticulture and Water

(Mike Oates: michael.oates@wcc.govt.nz)

Weeds and Urban Ecology

(Alistair Hay: alistair.hay@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au)

As in Geelong, related Workshops and Field Trips will be included in the program.

If you have suggestions of topics which could be included in any of the above streams, would like to contribute to the speakers' program or wish to put forward names of potential speakers, please contact the Stream Co-ordinators.

Further Congress details will be given in the next issue of the newsletter, due for publication in November.

New Zealand Plant Conservation Network – Annual Conference

Sponsored by the Auckland Regional Council and the Department of Conservation, this conference is to be held at Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens on Saturday 7 August 2004. Speakers include Ewen Cameron, Kevin Prime and Hugo Baynes and workshops are to be

held on the threatened plants of Auckland, on indigenous fungi and on threatened plant translocation. There will also be an opportunity to tour the botanic gardens.

A field trip to visit threatened plant sites in Auckland will be run on Sunday 8 August.

For further information:

NZPCN

P.O. Box 16-102

Wellington, New Zealand

www.nzpcn.org.nz

Victorian Botanic Gardens Network Meeting

Wednesday 18 August 2004, 9am – 3 pm

This is an opportunity to discuss the role of BGANZ as the umbrella organization for Australasian botanic gardens and to facilitate formal feedback to CHABG on the priorities and direction for BGANZ from the perspective of a regional network. Dr Phillip Moors, Director RBG will chair the BGANZ discussion. Full agenda to be advised.

People

Dr Stephen Hopper

The CHABG meeting held in Wellington, NZ in March was the last appearance of Dr Stephen Hopper participating as CEO of Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, Kings Park and Botanic Garden, Perth, WA. Dr Hopper has been appointed Foundation Chair of Plant Conservation Biology, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Western Australia and takes up this position on July 1. This is primarily a research position with some teaching.

Steve Hopper's considerable professional expertise and his commitment to the role and purpose of CHABG have been of invaluable benefit to the organization over a period of twelve years. We thank him most sincerely for his leadership and significant contribution to CHABG and wish him well with his new appointment.

Steve Corbett

Mr Steve Corbett, Director, Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, is another member of CHABG on the move. Steve is to take up an appointment as Director, Centennial Parklands in Sydney.

Prior to his appointment as Director of RTBG in 2002, Steve specialised for much of his career in botanic gardens' operations and management. His experience has included a senior management role with the Olympic Coordination Authority in NSW and as a senior consultant providing expert advice and project management to garden and park authorities.

Steve is also to be thanked for his contribution to CHABG and wished well for the challenge of his new appointment.

New managers at ANBG

Two new staff will shortly take up senior positions at ANBG.

Carolyn Parsons will become the Public Programs and Marketing Manager in late July 2004. She has previous experience in public programs in Screensound (Canberra), Uluru National Parks and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. She replaces Rod Harvey, who left the ANBG in April after 19 years of service in a variety of roles.

Sarah Chalkey will become Development Manager in November 2004. Sarah has landscape architecture and environmental education background, with experience in a variety of organisations. She replaces Alison Shepherd, who left the ANBG in May after 5 years as Development Manager.

Articles

Historic meeting between Australian and New Zealand Garden Directors

March 25th – 27th 2004

The March 2004 CHABG meeting took place in Wellington New Zealand, following an invitation from Mike Oates, Manager of Natural and Botanic Areas for Wellington City Council. Mike had attended the last two

CHABG meetings as the NZ representative and suggested the meeting be held in New Zealand and extended over three days. This allowed the usual CHABG meeting to be held on the first day followed on the second day by a joint meeting between NZ and Australian directors and managers. Interspersed with the formal parts of the meeting were visits to Wellington Botanic Garden and Otari Wiltons Bush. A visit to the unique Karori Wildlife Sanctuary on the final day was a fitting way to end this historic meeting.

CHABG meeting 25th May



CHABG Meeting, Wellington, NZ – March 2004

Major outcomes from the meeting were

- Approval of a constitution for Botanic Gardens Australia New Zealand (BGANZ). Discussion took place on the future role for this organisation and its membership. It was agreed that the launch should take place in Hobart in October 2005 and that the next twelve months should be spent planning its future roles and activities and preparing a business plan. In particular it was agreed that market research should be carried out within the botanic garden community to find out what priorities should be for such an organisation, and how it could best service members and become the lead body for botanic gardens on both sides of the Tasman.
- Planning future editions of the newsletter, with an emphasis on themes/topics including gardens and tourism, key Performance Indicators, education, planning and assessing plant collections and

fundraising. Please contact the Editorial Committee members if you can contribute articles on any of these themes.

- Two Career Development grants to be offered in 2004 worth \$3000 each. Next years grants to focus on assisting staff get to the Tasmanian Congress. Post script. No grants were awarded this year. The funds will be put into increased support for the 2005 Congress.
- Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. CHABG agreed to gather information collectively on the work Botanic Gardens are doing in Australia. There seems to be little interest in Australia at Federal or State level (or in NZ) on adopting the strategy and its goals. It was felt, however, that Botanic Gardens had a major role to play and should continue to promote the value of the strategy and adopt its goals as appropriate within individual gardens objectives.
- BGANZ Congress 2003. A report was tabled by John Arnott, Geelong Botanic Gardens, on the Congress. The Congress was an outstanding success with 218 delegates over the three days including 80 from the major gardens, 70 from regional gardens, 24 from Friends groups and 6 from NZ. The profit from this Congress is being kept as seeding funds for the establishment and development of BGANZ and future congresses.

BGANZ Congress 2005 Hobart, Tasmania.

Details of the next congress were confirmed with four main streams:

- Weeds and Urban Ecology
- Sustainable horticulture and water
- Environmental education
- Collections and Science

The day ended with a visit to Otari Wiltons Bush, a 90 hectare reserve, 10 minutes from downtown Wellington. It is the only botanic garden in New Zealand devoted solely to native plants and comprises 5 hectares of plant collections and 85 hectares of regenerating and mature native forest. The guides were Robyn Smith, Curator and Dr John Dawson, retired reader on Botany from Victoria University

of Wellington. They gave a fascinating tour around the collections focusing on the history of the reserve and the unique characteristic of New Zealand plants. The role of imported Australian possums was also debated at great length!! This continued into the evening with a pleasant dinner in town where we were joined by some of the NZ managers who had arrived for the meeting next day.

Joint NZ Australian meeting March 26th



'Heads of Australian & New Zealand Botanic Gardens'

This was an historic meeting in many ways. The first time that NZ garden managers had got together for many years; the first time they had met with their Australian counterparts; and a chance to confirm the establishment of a professional organization to enable gardens to work and network together. Ten NZ managers were present representing 7 gardens, ranging from the large metropolitan Gardens to Eastwoodhill Arboretum, near Gisborne, managed by a charitable trust.

The meeting was a good chance for garden managers to get to know each other and discuss what they wanted out of BGANZ, and what the priorities should be for the first 3 to 5 years. Major benefits of BGANZ were seen as:

- Facilitate information sharing through regular meetings
- Develop joint standards for training and development, curatorial management etc
- Provide a vehicle for collective clout and advocacy
- Enable joint marketing initiatives
- Establish joint programs such as staff exchange

- Professional development
- Major role in plant conservation
- Developing benchmarking systems that could be used by all gardens to compare their performance

It was agreed that much work needed to be done to enable the launch of BGANZ by October 2005, in particular deciding on the membership structure and costs. The New Zealand delegates agreed to establish a sub-group to work on the establishment of BGANZ and firm up on its priorities for the first few years.

As well as the general discussions there were three presentations during the day:

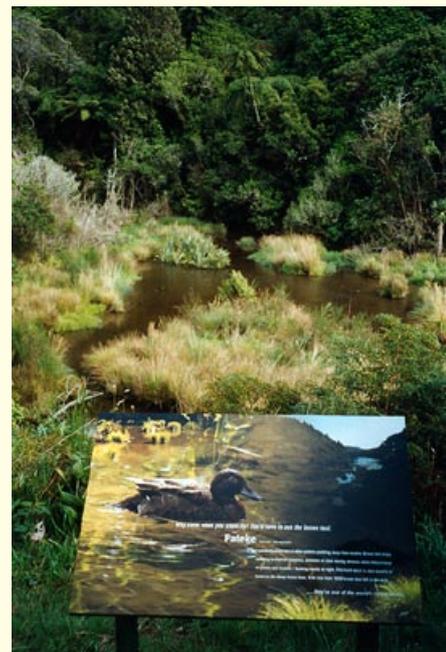
Mick Reece, Community Services Manager for Dunedin City Council gave a talk on the NZ botanic garden system and their development primarily within a local authority context.

John Sawyer from the Department of Conservation gave a thought provoking address on the role of botanic gardens in plant conservation. He also talked about the newly established NZ Plant Conservation Network and how gardens could work as part of this national network.

David Sole, Manager of Wellington Botanic Garden and Otari Wiltons Bush talked about the review of plant collections taking place, and its focus on landscape context as well as specific collection objectives.

The day ended with a tour of the Wellington Botanic garden lead by David Sole and focused on the redevelopment of the conifer framework and the changes this will bring to the landscape as a 130 year old landscape is renewed over the next 30 years.

Visit to Karori Wildlife Sanctuary 27th May



This was a relaxed two hour tour around one of NZ's newest and most innovative wildlife sanctuaries – a 250 hectare mainland island 10 minutes from downtown Wellington, with a fence around the outside to keep out introduced predators. Inside native birds have been reintroduced, many of them missing from Wellington for nearly 100 years. Kiwi, weka,

bellbird, kaka, and kokako to name a few. We were privileged to have as our tour guide Stephen Fuller, former CEO, current trustee and ecologist. Stephen gave us a warts and all tour and outlined the challenges of running a conservation organization carrying our ground breaking work, whilst at the same time developing as a major tourist attraction with limited resources and little core funding. A truly inspiring way to finish off what had been a busy but rewarding three days.

Where to from here?

Well, next stop is Perth in October 2004 for the next CHBAG meeting but in between times a lot of work is needed to turn our vision into reality. However, based on our experience in Wellington, working together towards a common vision for botanic gardens can be an experience you want to repeat.

*Mike Oates
Manager Natural and Botanic Areas
Wellington City Council*

2nd NSW Regional Botanic Gardens Conference

14-16 May 2004

Orange Botanic Gardens

About 70 delegates from all over eastern Australia enjoyed a rich and varied program at the 2nd NSW Regional Botanic Gardens Conference. Orange in May can be cold and forbidding but the weather over the weekend of 14-16 May 2004 was perfect, and allowed the delegates to enjoy the remnant autumn colours of the city bathed in warming sunshine.

Centred around the three themes of Design, Education and Community, the conference program offered some general talks and some talks which concentrated on particular aspects of these three themes. The opening and closing speakers showed how these themes apply to two of Australia's most established public gardens: Tim Entwisle on the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, and Mark Fountain on the Royal Tasmanian Botanic Gardens, Hobart.

Three specialist talks on Design were quite different in their approaches. Graham Fletcher, from the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of NSW, challenged us to rethink how we go about designing anything. Some of the best garden designs have come from lateral thinkers who see new possibilities in garden layout. Graham looked at how gardens may be designed by creating a design to fit a particular landscape or by finding a landscape to fit a particular design. It was an interesting and thought-provoking talk. Graham was followed by Matt Forsyth, a local surveyor who spoke on the practical aspects of mapping in garden design, bringing the conceptual aspects covered by Graham down to earth. Sarah Hoskins (a local landscape architect) and Neil Bollinger (Supervisor of Orange Botanic Gardens) then spoke on how OBG had been designed and Michael Anlezark provided an overview of Burrendong Botanic Garden and Arboretum.

The second day of talks looked at Education and Community. Peter Lehmann (Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra) covered most of the ways in which ANBG is used as an education resource through its interpretative signage, guided walks, interactive displays (particularly for children) and the extensive research support that is available through the presence of research botanists on site. He also noted that botanic gardens not only provide information about different types of plants but were powerful tools for education in conservation, gardening, sustainability and a range of other areas.

Neil Jones (Western Institute of TAFE, Orange) took the reverse view – how are our education institutions providing training for botanic gardens? Neil covered the types of training provided and the opportunities available for gardens staff, managers and designers to receive appropriate technical training. Input to curricula and course design from those actually involved in running botanic gardens is essential to make the training courses relevant.

The next two speakers covered the involvement of a community in their local botanic gardens. Murray Fletcher, President of the Friends of OBG, spoke on the role of the Friends in

supporting the employed staff. Friends groups are able to raise extra funds to add special features to the gardens and to run activities that bring the community into the gardens. In addition, the gardens themselves provide opportunities for members of the community to get practical experience cultivating and growing plants, helping with garden maintenance and promoting appropriate use of the gardens. Graham Fleming, Orange Rotary Daybreak Club, was the chairman of the organising committee for five Central West Garden and Outdoor Expos. These functions, which were held in OBG, raised large amounts of money for local charities (including OBG) and brought thousands of visitors to the gardens. Nearly 30 different community groups were involved in organising or running the Expos. Graham spoke on the things that he feels were done well and those he felt could have been done better. This is one talk where most delegates were feverishly taking notes. Many gardens have tried to create an activity as successful as the Orange Expos and Graham had some valuable hints on why those in which he was involved had worked so well.

Finally, Rob Small, CEO of Colac-Otway Shire in Victoria, spoke on the future for botanic gardens. One of the most stimulating speakers at the conference, Rob asked two questions – “What is your botanic garden supposed to be there for?” and “What makes your botanic gardens unique?” If you don’t have answers for these two questions, then your garden is in danger of degenerating into a comfortable park. Rob left some delegates feeling worried that their gardens were doing just that but, having attended this conference and heard this talk, a new direction might be appearing for many regional public gardens.

The social aspects of the conference were outstanding. A guided bus tour on the preceding Friday visited the Cowra Japanese Gardens and the Age of Fishes Museum in Canowindra, with lunch at Hamilton’s Bluff Winery an extra bonus. The conference dinner on Saturday night was held in the magnificent Duntryleague Guest House and featured a fascinating talk by Ian Marr, a local sculptor. Ian specialises in carving text into stone and showed that it’s not just a

matter of writing cute things in slate. The text selected, and the type of stone chosen, are the subject of considerable research to ensure that the message delivered forms part of the overall atmosphere of the location in which the work will be displayed so that the piece adds depth and meaning to a beautiful place.

Overall, the conference organisation was exceptional and although the cost was on the higher side, delegates felt they had good value for money and were given ample opportunity to interact with a wide range of garden managers and workers from major public gardens to smaller regional centres. The next NSW Regional Botanic Gardens Conference will be held in two years time in Albury.

*Murray Fletcher
Friends of Orange Botanic Gardens*



*‘Ian Marr espouses his philosophy at the Conference dinner’.
Photo M.J. Fletcher*



*‘At the Conference dinner L-R:
Paul Scannel (Albury BG), Rusty Worsman (Mt Tomah BG),
Michael Anlezark (Burrendong BG), Caz McCallum (Mt
Annan BG)*

New Nursery for ANBG



On 18 June 2004, Senator Gary Humphries opened the new production nursery at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. The nursery cost \$4 million and will enable the efficient production of up to 40,000 plants per year, including many rare and endangered native species.

The new nursery is the largest single development project undertaken by the Gardens since opening in 1970. The project included extensive staff consultation and was designed and constructed by two Canberra firms – Gutteridge Haskins & Davey Pty Ltd and Binutti Construction Pty Ltd.

The project showcases modern nursery design and incorporates modern plant and equipment, environmental efficiency, water recycling and composting toilets to minimise water use and waste management.

The design makes use of the natural slope on the eastern end of the site by incorporating a lower floor area to house vehicles, bulk materials, a water recycling plant and incidental storage space. The incorporation of the lower floor area has provided more space for the layout of the main nursery facilities on the platform at ground level.

The new nursery is sited on the northern edge of the gardens, close to road access and well away from major public use areas. The original nursery site, adjacent to the Eucalypt Lawn in the centre of the Gardens, had serious structural, safety and efficiency problems. It will eventually be redeveloped for public access.

Robin Nielsen
Director ANBG



Museum of Economic Botany is a focus in over \$5 million 150th anniversary Adelaide Botanic Gardens upgrade.

Details of a \$5 million funding package for the Museum and several other iconic projects were announced today by the Minister for Environment & Conservation, John Hill.

Botanic Gardens of Adelaide Director, Stephen Forbes, said plans for the Museum of Economic Botany involved the addition of a contemporary covered plaza at the rear of the building, including a visitor information kiosk to assist with visitor orientation and a meeting point for tours, and a refreshments facility. The plaza will also provide disability access, toilet facilities and emergency egress for the Museum for the first time.

“We envisage this flexible space will be used in conjunction with the Museum for educational and cultural displays, exhibitions, events and activities to revive the original role of the Museum in a contemporary context,” Mr Forbes said.

“The museum currently attracts 18,000 visitors a year – or just 1.8% of total visitors to the Gardens. This project will raise the cultural importance of this stunning building by increasing and lengthening visitation and maximising educational and interpretative outcomes.”

The plaza will overlook the adjacent Italianate Garden, which is proposed to be adapted to showcase Mediterranean plants with the goal of promoting plants in harmony with South Australia’s environment and modelling sustainable horticultural practices.

Mr Forbes said the funding would also be directed towards the redevelopment of the nearby Victoria House and the replacement of decrepit glasshouses with a contemporary glasshouse structure dedicated to displaying the famous *Victoria amazonica* waterlily in its original pond, which is of great historical importance to the Garden.

“The Board of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium is confident these exciting iconic projects will rejuvenate existing infrastructure

and create a vibrant cultural hub in the centre of the State’s most visited cultural attraction,” Mr Forbes said.

“These exciting projects will help celebrate the Gardens’ history by breathing life into its unique collection of heritage and cultural assets. By doing so, the Gardens will have a central location to showcase education and interpretation programs and improved access for the community, including those with disabilities.

“These projects provide an exciting opportunity to reposition the Gardens as a key cultural and scientific institution into the 22nd Century, as it was in the 19th Century when the Museum and former Victoria House were built.”

The projects have been endorsed and advanced by the Board of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium, which manages the Gardens as a cultural and scientific institution. The projects are consistent with the Gardens’ Strategic Plan, form part of the Gardens’ first Site Master Plan since the 19th Century, and will also be a major focus for a new Gardens Foundation to be established over the coming weeks. The Foundation will assist in profiling the Gardens in the business sector and broader community.

The Board of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium will be holding stakeholder consultation sessions over the next few months to gain input to the proposed projects from the Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide, Gardens staff, botanists, horticulturists, heritage architects from the Department for Administrative and Information Services and the community.

Feature Garden

Eastwoodhill Arboretum

The July 2003 issue of The Botanic Garden featured an article about Otari Wilton's Bush in Wellington, New Zealand. This historic reserve owes much to the foresight of Job Wilton, an early European settler in Wellington who in 1860 set aside 5 hectares of forest when landowners around him were cutting it down.

The following article tells another story

of vision - the development of a very fine arboretum in Gisborne, on New Zealand's east coast. Development has taken place whilst keeping in mind the original vision and foresight shown by William Douglas Cook, a New Zealander with 'a desire to create something beautiful' and 'an overwhelming passion to leave this earth a better place.'



'Autumn colour' from lookout

Established ninety years ago by a man with a vision of a woodland landscape, Eastwoodhill Arboretum is today a collection of some 4,000 taxa and acclaimed as one of the finest arboretums south of the equator. Each year thousands of people from around New Zealand and the world visit to wander around this forest of trees.

The story of Eastwoodhill starts in 1910 when William Douglas Cook purchased 250 ha of unimpressive weed and manuka covered land at Ngatapa, 35 miles inland from Gisborne on the East Coast of New Zealand. It can't have been much to look at then but in Douglas Cook's eye, he saw the potential of the land just not for a farm but for a garden beyond compare.

Cook's early efforts were a compromise between the needs of the farm and his desire to create something beautiful. He had no real pattern to his early plantings, only to beautify his immediate surroundings. In 1914 he planted 1,000 trees and shrubs two days before going to training camp and then on to war. In

1920, he spent £360 on 2,500 trees. Then in 1928, after seeing some of the early planting mistakes, he started to get serious. After visiting many of the large estates and gardens in England while convalescing from war injuries, Douglas Cook developed a planting plan and dedicated almost all his time, energy and money into creating the arboretum. By 1936 he had exhausted the New Zealand nurseries of plant material and started importing plants from America and Europe.



Beechwood

The soils and climate of Eastwoodhill proved a battle in establishing plant material. Layers of pumiceous ash from the many eruptions throughout the central North Island lie on top of a sandstone base and make the soil naturally dry and porous. Basic mulching practices assist the trees but until ponds were built in the 1950s, everything was watered by hand. Douglas Cook would water trees for two years and then left them to fend for themselves. Frosts and droughts took a heavy toll on the trees but the relentless planting more than made up for those losses. Cook was especially fond of Rhododendrons and over the years, he established a large collection of over 100 species and 300 cultivars that even today still form one of Eastwoodhill's key genera. However, the climate of the East Coast and the loss of many beloved Rhodos led Douglas Cook over to the West Coast of the North Island to the slopes of Mt Taranaki, where he purchased and gifted a 60 ha block of land and helped established the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust.



Rhododendron nuttallii

With World War 2, the advent of nuclear weapons, and the Cold War, Douglas Cook began seeing the arboretum as a way of preserving Northern Hemisphere plants that might be otherwise lost in a nuclear holocaust. Although this never eventuated, the threat of acid rain and urban sprawl throughout the Northern Hemisphere have come to threaten a number of species cultivated by Cook and he began receiving requests for plant material even from various nurseries that had supplied him with the plants in the first place.

Cook's final years were spent trying to secure the future of Eastwoodhill. He had tried without success for many years to get various organisations and individuals to buy and manage the place, but to no avail. However HB (Bill) Williams a local farmer and philanthropist stepped in and purchased the property a couple of years before Cook died.

Bill Williams was finally able to achieve Cook's goal but it required a great deal of perseverance and an Act of Parliament. The Act setting up the trust was eventually passed through Parliament in 1975 and the Williams family gifted the property to the trust and Bill became the first chairperson.

Today the trust continues to develop and manage the 135ha property. Supported by the Friends of Eastwoodhill, a volunteer group established to promote and raise funds for the arboretum, the arboretum is managed by three full time staff, the curator, farm manager, office administrator and a part time herbarium curator. In addition to the Friends of Eastwoodhill, a volunteer garden group comes up on a weekly basis to help maintain the 1ha Homestead Garden and twice a week local periodic detention workers assist with some of the manual work around the arboretum.



View of the Homestead Garden

Douglas Cook is thought to have planted some 6,000 species, cultivars and varieties of trees and shrubs, of which 2,700 remained when the Eastwoodhill Trust Board took over in 1975. Since then the collection has expanded to some 4,075 species, cultivars and varieties representing 138 families and 631 genera (50 conifers and 581 angiosperm). As many as 165 species are listed as rare or endangered. 69% of the collection is from the Northern Hemisphere with 41% from China alone.



Chiranthodendron pentadactylon



Davidia involucreta var vilmoriniana

The arboretum is open every day of the year (except Good Friday and Christmas Day). Facilities include a library with over 800 horticultural books, a herbarium, lab facilities and accommodation for up to twenty-two people. The arboretum is broken up into various 'Parks' with some loose generic or geographical themes, but generally trees were planted in a random fashion and where they would survive best. The East Coast climate is a very mild climate with an average rainfall of 1100mm a year but with quite dry summers and sometimes frosty winters. Currently about 90ha of the arboretum is planted with specimen trees with over 15km of walking tracks traversing the property with forestry and grazing on the remaining land.

Eastwoodhill Arboretum is utilised by a wide selection of the community from pre school groups to post graduate university students.

Interest groups like Forest and Bird, Tree Crops and gardening groups will often book the centre out for weekend retreats and group outings.



Climbing demonstration for school kids

The future of Eastwoodhill, like many small operations, is tenuous. Even though this past year has seen the highest visitor numbers to date, we are still small compared to many other Botanic Gardens or Arboretums. Our isolated location, new bio security laws and lack of regional or national government support, limits our ability to maintain and develop the arboretum. Eastwoodhill was created by a man with an overwhelming passion to leave this earth a better place and were he alive today, I am sure he would be proud of the many people who continue with that dream.

Paul Wynen

Curator

Eastwoodhill Arboretum

www.eastwoodhill.org.nz

