

Bason botanic gardens trust

spring 2015 newsletter

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 26/10/2015

This year continues to be a very busy one for the Bason.

The Japanese Tea House:

The tea house has weathered the winter and work has started on hard landscaping. The shellrock base is down and pea metal will be added on top shortly. The planning

of tall bamboo and Cherry trees is complete. Further plantings of the smaller plants will probably wait until the autumn.

New Sculpture:

The base for the "Villa Rustica" Sculpture has been prepared ready for the sculpture to be built in mid-November. It may be already in place by the time you receive this newsletter. This will be an exciting event and will add another dimension to the Gardens. Situated at the foot of the Millennium Hill Steps the sculpture will be very prominent in a much visited area.

New Barbecues:

The new sculptural barbecues below the hairpin on the way to Picnic Flat should be commissioned by the time you receive this Newsletter. These barbecues are partially covered to offer shelter from sun or showers. They not only provide extra facilities to cater for increased use by patrons this summer but are also a work of art in themselves. I encourage everyone to try them out.

LEADING SPEAKER AT BASON GARDENS AGM

Kerei Thompson, landscape artist extraordinaire, was the guest speaker at Annual General Meeting on 27 August. Kerei's business, Bark Ltd, maintains and enhances top gardens such as Government House (both Wellington and Auckland), Parliament, Vogel House, and Auckland's Ayrlies garden and has received many Landscape Awards. Kerei, a Fellow of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture and Chair of the New Zealand Gardens Trust, spoke about the art of gardening in public places such as Wanganui's Bason Botanic Gardens.



Kerei Thompson

The Great Bason Fair and Macbeth in the Park - February 12th to 14th:

The gardens have matured much over that past few years and continue to draw increasing visitor numbers – and increasing visitor numbers are essential for the Gardens' future viability. We aim to make more people aware of what the Bason has to offer by holding our first Great Bason Fair on February 14th. This will be very much a family affair and will have an Elizabethan theme. The idea grew from a proposal for a performance of Macbeth, to mark the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death, in the natural amphitheatre that is the Frisbee arena. More information will be out soon but expect demonstrations of archery and fencing as well as hobby horse jousting, Elizabethan musicians, period actors, plenty of "Olde Worlde" games, food of the period and much, much more.

Please visit the Fair website:

<http://www.basonbotanicgardens.org.nz/news/upcoming-events/the-great-bason-fair>

And share and like our Fair Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/GreatBasonFair>

This is indeed developing into an exciting future for what is most commonly known as our beloved "Bason Reserve"

See you at the Fair

Terry Dowdeswell

Chair

Bason Botanic Gardens Trust Board

<http://www.basonbotanicgardens.org.nz/>

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Kerei focused on the role and future of gardens, parks and botanic gardens. He is adamant that gardening is an art form which should be reflected in the way gardens are presented if they are to fulfil their purpose and give maximum enjoyment to those who visit them. A public garden should integrate elements of landscape, plants, plantings, sculptures and other structural features such as pathways and conservatories. By successfully doing so a garden will appeal to a broad section of the public who will come to see and enjoy...and develop an interest in gardening themselves.

Kerei pointed out that garden destinations

have to compete with cafés and shopping for the consumer dollar. This reinforces the importance of having facilities such as the barbecues that are provided at Bason Gardens. Kerei said that it is great if these facilities can double as a work of art, as the new covered barbecues at the Gardens do!

“The great Botanic Gardens of the world include sculptures to encourage visitors and enhance the visitor experience,” said Kerei. “At the same time, the plants can’t be neglected. They need to be nurtured well, as they are the proper base of the garden. It can be tricky to balance the available funds to allow both aspects.”

TEA HOUSE BAMBOOS

Clive Higgie

In the Japanese garden plantings, we are including bamboos. With over a thousand species from many genera, we have chosen three for the Tea House Peninsula.

The first criterion was that they were Japanese species, or at least widespread there. This ruled out all the clumping bamboos, as they tend to come from India, the Himalayas and south-east Asia. The upside of this is that the ones needing vigilant control, that is the spreading bamboos, are the most beautiful.

Controlling bamboos isn’t difficult. However it just has to be done – and regularly checked. Likewise, maintenance of the bamboos themselves is necessary. Effort-wise, looking after a running bamboo will be similar perhaps to half a dozen roses or tomatoes. The result is real food for the soul, rather than simply eye candy.

So let’s see what we’ve planted, or will be planting this autumn.

The smallest is *Pleioblastus pygmaea*. It grows to about a metre high. It is the smallest bamboo I know. We will be treating it as a ground cover, or a lawn, if you like, with a yearly mow. Often bamboo aficionados unkindly call these small bamboos “rabbit food” bamboos, but they are very beautiful, tough and, in our case, appropriate.

The second bamboo is *Sassa veitchii*. I rate this bamboo very highly. It remains low, perhaps to 1.5m high, and is spreading (but fairly slowly). Its large leaves (150mm by 50mm) are strikingly marked.

Kerei spoke with admiration of the how the beautiful features at the Bason, such as the conservatories, Homestead Garden entrance, and covered barbecues, fit so well with the topography and progression through the Gardens. In particular, Kerei was impressed with how the Alexander Steps used the contours at the Lakeside so that the public could relate to the Lake and access it. Kerei pointed out that each garden area needs to have its own “fresh” feel to provide ongoing stimulation to visitors. Overall, Kerei congratulated Wanganui on its achievement with the Gardens over the years.



Bamboo from Paloma Gardens for the Japanese Tea House. Left to right: Clive Higgie, Scott Wilson, Kelly Jean Kerr, Hel Loader.

Both these bamboos are very uncommon in New Zealand and we have had to propagate them ourselves. They should be ready to plant this autumn.

The last of our three bamboo species has already been planted. *Phyllostachys edulis* ‘Bicolor’ is, as the others, highly ornamental. But it also has size and stature. It is what is called a timber bamboo. They form large groves, forests if you like, and require controlling.

So what is this timber bamboo? It is a cultivar of the famous and widespread Moso. This cultivar has golden culms, with a green stripe. It doesn’t grow as high or as large as Moso. It’s perfect for our project. It’ll still get to six to 10m high and 100mm diameter. We won’t be mowing this baby, but we will be thinning and grooming it. This golden Moso’s specific name gives a clue as to one of its major uses. It’s perhaps the most edible bamboo and its timber is very strong and usable for construction.

BOOKINGS: Direct all Botanic Gardens venue/BBQ bookings to the Customer Service Desk
Wanganui District Council, phone 349 001.

MEMBERSHIP:

Become a **Friend of the Bason**, or gift a subscription, and support Stanley Bason’s dream.

Send your name, postal and email address to BBGT Treasurer.
Membership: Individual \$20; Family \$30; Corporate \$100; Life \$500

Internet banking is also available. The bank details are:

Account Name: Bason Botanic Gardens Trust Account
Account Number: 03-0791-0463019-00

Use your name as a reference and also please state whether this is a donation or membership subscription.

Notification of payment can also be emailed to the Treasurer if you wish, at terry@delphinium.co.nz

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JAPANESE TEA HOUSE AND GARDEN.

By Kelly Jean Kerr

When the decision was made that the Tea House from The Ngaizumi Friendship Centre in Wanganui East would be relocated to Bason Botanical Gardens, it was fortuitous that the perfect site was already waiting for it, on a small peninsula overlooking the lake.

The garden of a Tea House plays an important role in the Tea Ceremony because it creates the transition from the busy outside world to the tranquillity of the Tea House. It engages the senses and calms the soul. It is also where the ritual cleansing or purification takes place before the ceremony begins. So it was with careful consideration that Clive Higgie and I took up the challenge of designing the surrounding garden for the Tea House.

When you think of Japanese gardens, visions of immaculately groomed bonsai and raked gravel gardens tend to spring to mind; and while that would be a stunning backdrop for the Tea House, we had to be realistic in that the garden will not be groomed every day and that it will be open to the public unsupervised. Therefore the design is in the *style* of a Japanese Tea House garden rather a highly authentic Japanese Tea House garden.

However, the basic design of the Bason Tea House Garden is a

combination of common Tea garden design elements. The outer garden - in this case- is represented by the curving pathway through the forest bamboo. It symbolises the journey from the outside world and is usually curved to allow time to shed the anxieties and cares of the outside world before arriving into the inner garden.

The Machiai (waiting house) is a waiting area contained by a simple bamboo fence that separates the inner and outer gardens. Ceremony Guests wait here until the Tea Host comes to greet them and bring them into the Tea house. The inner garden is where the tea house is situated. The Roji (dewy path) is the pathway into the garden. The Tobi ishi (stepping stones) within the inner garden are important as they make it necessary to concentrate on where to place one's feet, and it influences the way the guest experiences the garden. The Tsukabi (stone basin) is where guests wash their hands and drink as a way of cleansing or purification before the Tea Ceremony takes place.

The garden itself is a contrast between elements, the unchanging permanence of the rocks and stones against the changing plants that show the passing of the seasons. The rocks and stones are arranged to imitate nature, representing mountains, hills and water. Plants are frequently used as symbols in

Japanese garden design. Bamboo - detailed in Clive's accompanying article - symbolises longevity and happiness. The Flowering cherry trees are *Prunus Shirotae* - 'Mt Fuji Cherry'- which traditionally symbolise fragility; and in our situation, Ngaizumi's location close to Mount Fuji. The maples - *Acer palmatum* - symbolise the change of seasons in life and nature.

Simplicity, asymmetry, using odd numbers of plants and contrast are all underlying design principles in Japanese garden design and they have influenced placement and plant choices within the design.

Finally, an important aspect in a Japanese Tea Garden design is the 'borrowed landscape' around the site. Viewing the Tea House across the water from the Picnic flat, Bason's Tea House garden is overlooked by the hill behind - now the site of Ian Hamiltons memorial totara grove - and when standing within the inner garden, the view from the Tea House steps is out over the lake and to the farmland beyond.

It is a simple view that reminds us of what the Bason Botanic Gardens started out as and how far it has come. So thank you Ngaizumi for this wonderful gift. The arrival of the Tea House is a welcome addition to the beautiful gardens that, as Wanganui people, we are fortunate to call our own.



Contouring of the Tea House peninsula has been completed, and rocks installed, under the supervision of Clive Higgie. The larger trees have all been planted.

**LANDSCAPE PLAN
FOR THE JAPANESE
TEA HOUSE**

Prepared by
Kelly Jean Kerr and
endorsed by the
Nagazumi Council

REQUESTS:

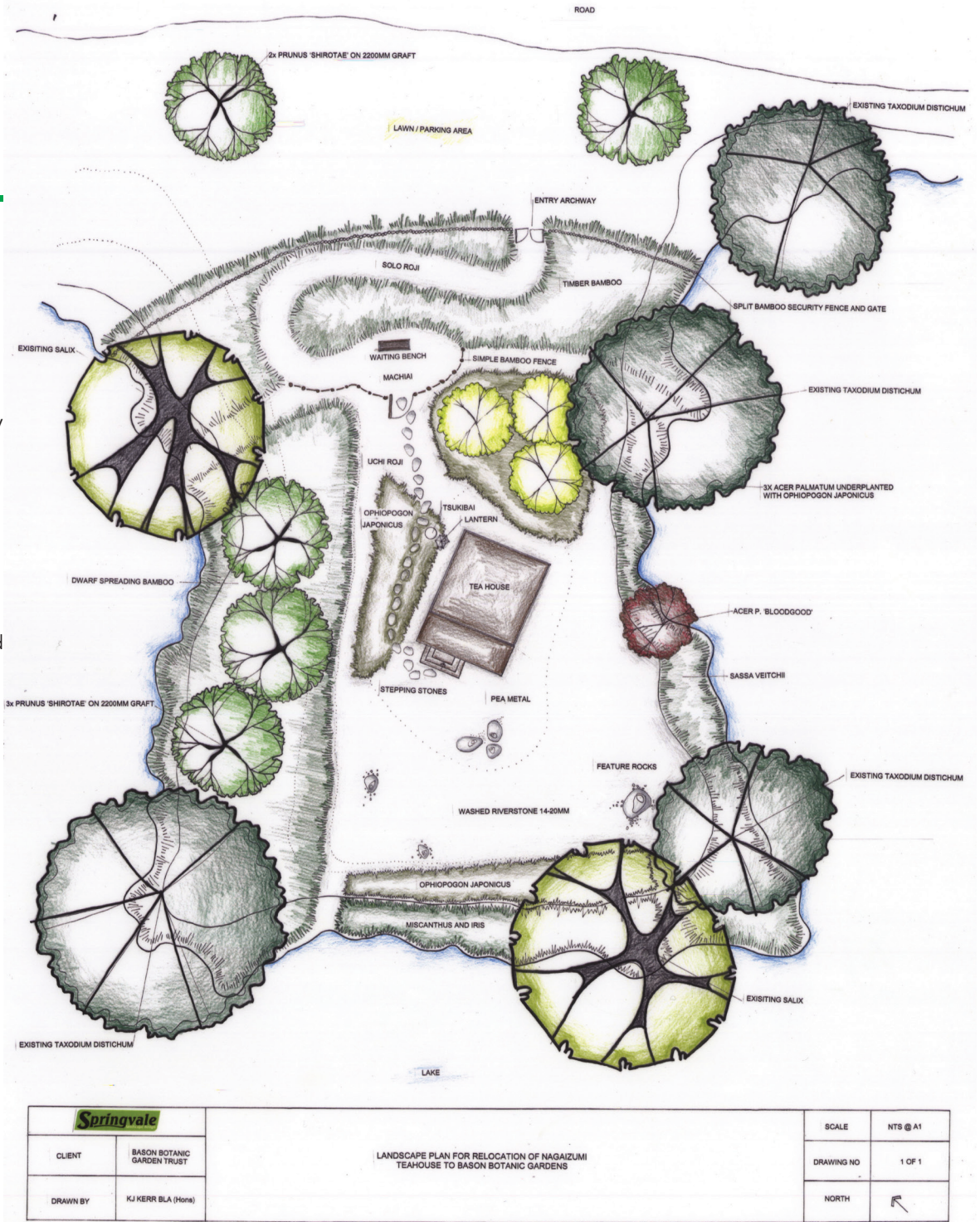
Email addresses:

Most organisations now send their newsletters by email, and the Trust would like to start doing this also. This would cut the printing and postage bills; the money could instead be spent on works at the Gardens. If you are willing to receive your Newsletter by email, could you please let Andrea Coleman (Membership Secretary) know. Her email is andrcole@slingshot.co.nz. It would be useful to have members' email addresses for other reasons, for instance to remind you of upcoming events.

Succulent Garden volunteers:

While there is a keen and happy team doing the maintenance of the succulent garden in the Homestead Garden under the guidance of Vonnie Cave, more would be very welcome. If you have the time and energy to help with this worthy cause, plus would benefit from the companionship, Janice Hall would love to hear from you at –

gandjhall@xtra.co.nz
or you can ring her on –
(06) 344 2495.



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