



# Bason botanic gardens trust

winter 2016 newsletter

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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Terry Dowdeswell

It has been another busy and bright quarter at the Bason. Starting with the Top Flat, the newly painted pergola leading to the conservatories may have gone unnoticed by some, but that is unlikely! Lime green was a bold choice, but it works very well and really lights up the area. This should encourage more visitors to walk to the Homestead Garden and Conservatories. While on this topic, we are very pleased with the way the orchids are responding to being irrigated with rainwater, after the recent installation of a rainwater collection system and water tanks.

Moving down the Millennium Hill, the road sealing around the lake is now complete. This is thanks to budgetary input from the Wanganui District Council and a generous \$30,000 donation from the Powerco Trust. This will make a huge difference as water scouring was making the unsealed road difficult to navigate at times and dust in the summer months could be unpleasant.

The Japanese Tea house is settling into its new home. The tall bamboo and flowering cherries planted in late summer are coming away nicely and recent plantings of azaleas are taking hold. Mondo grass and more short bamboo should also be in place by the time this Newsletter is published. Now that the road is sealed the Board is hopeful that construction of a walkway to allow safe and easy passage between the Picnic Flat and the Japanese Tea House will be completed in the near future.

Unfortunately the new covered barbecues had an issue with gas build-up and had to be closed in February.



*The pergola glows in the late afternoon sun, even in the depths of winter.*

Fixing this has proven problematic; however we expect to have them functional again by spring.

With all accounts well and truly in, we can report that the highly successful production of Macbeth and Great Bason Fair in February returned a surplus. This has been invested for use as seed money for future events.

Thanks to the foresight of Stanley and Blanche Bason, the original Board, the continuing and outstanding efforts of many volunteers, and the commitment of the Whanganui District Council and contractors, the Gardens have become an important attraction to Whanganui. The past few years have seen a number of capital works installed to make the Bason experience a more appealing destination for both new and existing users. Recent summer events have lifted the garden's profile, particularly with those who may otherwise not have visited them. The Gardens have matured.

However, I believe that although there may well be more capital works in the future, we should not, and must not, lose sight of the fact that this is a Botanic Garden. It is trees. It is plants. It is beauty. It is educational. It is a sanctuary. We must concentrate on this.

Thanks again to all who have helped make this happen.

## Daffodils

By the time you receive this Newsletter, the daffodils in the Spring Walk should be coming into bloom. August is the best month for them; they provide a cheerful reminder that winter is coming to an end!



## ROAD SEALING

Wendy Bainbridge

An ongoing bugbear at the Gardens has been the unsealed section of roading around the Lake. The nature of the road has led to rutting and periodic washouts, including from the flood of June 2015. This latter washout was particularly frustrating, as the road had just been relevelled as a result of earlier flooding. The washouts led to occasional closures of sections of the road, and higher maintenance costs for ratepayers. Plus, of course, it has reduced the quality of the visitor experience.

Sealing this section is on the Strategic Plan for the Gardens, however it has been tricky to get our ducks in a row. Finally we have been in a position to get this project completed, thanks to a collaboration between Wanganui District Council (through its Annual Plan), the Bason Gardens Trust Board, a significant contribution from the PowerCo Trust – for which we are very appreciative.

The work was done by an Alliance partner of the Council, Downer, under the capable supervision of Brendon Walker. It was carried out over the winter months, and took about three months in total. The weather impacted on operations at times; however not beyond what would be expected for this time of the year, and we thank the public for their patience regarding road closures. The works were a major undertaking, with installation of kerbing to channel water runoff, several culverts to direct runoff to the Lake, and the formation and sealing of the roadway itself. The work has already proven its worth as the sealing has held up well under recent heavy rainfall.

We would like to thank all those who supported this project, as it not only gets rid

of an ongoing maintenance issue, but adds to the quality asset that the Bason provides to visitors.

While on the subject of operations, the storm last year resulted in other damage. The most significant was the partial collapse of part of the fence on the eastern boundary that occurred as the result of a landslide from a neighbouring property. The fence has since been rebuilt.



*The damage caused by scouring from extreme weather events is clear in this example from 2013.*

*Contractors put finishing touches to the road sealing.*



**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 [alan.donald@clear.net.nz](mailto:alan.donald@clear.net.nz)

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## DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORCHID COLLECTION

Kevin Luff

Major changes have been made to the orchid collection displayed in the Conservatories, which had been struggling. As a consequence things are looking up. Contractors and the Board have been having problems with the growth of the orchids, even though the Conservatories are a great growing environment for them. So why weren't the orchids growing to perfection? Eventually the problem was tracked down to the irrigation source: the Council tested the water and found it to have levels of sodium that are in the toxic range for orchids. As a consequence, Nicki and Jennifer (the contractors) tried using rainwater, and the results were sensational. Most of the orchids were then moved to Virginia Lake, where growth showed an immediate improvement. As a consequence, rainwater tanks have been installed at the Gardens, adjacent to the conservatories.

Another major change is occurring. Council is having to rationalise its maintenance budget, as part of its overall scrutiny of expenditure. One saving the Board has agreed to is the removal of heating from two of the Conservatories. Only the specialist Larsen Orchid House will retain its heating system, which will be maintained at 17°C. To adapt to the new regime, we have been purchasing a range of cool-growing orchids. This includes many Masdevallias, and the base of an excellent Pleione collection.

The latter will make a great collection for the Garden, as they flower in late spring and early summer, after the main flush of orchids, and during a busy time for visits to the Garden.

### Annual General Meeting

The AGM of Bason Botanic Gardens will take place at the Davis Lecture Theatre, Watt St. at 7.00 pm on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2016.

The AGM will be followed at 7.30 by a presentation by Kelly-Jean Kerr, landscape gardener on her recent trip to the Singapore Garden Festival (see the article in this Newsletter).

If you wish to nominate someone for the Board, a nomination form can be obtained from Phil Thomsen (Secretary), and must be returned at least seven days before the AGM. The person nominated must sign their consent, as must the proposer and seconder. All these people must be current financial members.

The cool conservatories provide a perfect growing environment for these plants.

With a focus on cool-growing and easy to grow orchids, plus the installation of the rainwater tanks, the future for the orchid collection is bright. I am sure that we have the basis for a valuable asset which will help to attract garden visitors.



*Cool growing masdevallia are cool growing and have a long flowering period*

*Pleione are reliable flowerers through spring*



### Volunteer sought

The Trust Board is looking for a volunteer with an interest in supporting gardens, and skilled in modern communications such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and web site maintenance.

Ideally this person would be co-opted to the Board and be responsible for its external communications and profile.

If this interests you, or you know someone it would, please contact our Chair, Terry Dowdeswell  
ph: 027 351 6104

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND PRESENTATION

Bason Gardens Trust Board member and presenter at this year's AGM will be Kelly-Jean Kerr, the landscaper at Springvale Garden Centre. She has a Degree in Landscape Architecture with Honours from Lincoln University.

Kelly-Jean is someone who has had gardening in her life since birth. She was born and raised in a small "blink and you miss it" (as she puts it) rural town in Southland, just west of Invercargill. Since both sets of her Grandparents and also her parents were all keen gardeners, one could say that gardening was in her genes. From a young age, Kelly-Jean remembers visiting "Pop", her father's father, and admiring the Dublin Bay rose that was trained against the wall of their house. She was also fascinated to see his Jersey Benne seed potatoes sprouting in trays. He would also grow seedling Grosse Lisse tomato plants every year, and distribute them around her family to grow.

Her father still has a big vegetable garden at home in Southland; and while growing up Kelly-Jean and her sister had a corner each, fenced off with string to grow some vegetables. She delighted in growing spuds, carrots and radishes. Also in her garden were broad beans and white stone turnips, to which her response was a more disappointed "yuck!" After school it was common for Kelly-Jean to go and raid the garden or the berry bushes for a snack – Kelly-Jean is a great believer that it doesn't get much better than picked straight off the bush!

She also remembers watching the Palmers, and then Maggie's, Garden Show on Friday nights with her mother. This really struck a chord as she remembers wanting to be a landscape designer while she was as young as 11 or 12, and she never really wavered from that.



*Kelly-Jean Kerr receives her trophy for Young Horticulturalist of the Year in 2013.*

Kelly-Jean's favourite flowers are still the peony roses and sweet peas that her mother grew in her flower garden. However she found a place in her heart for the more exotic – Bougainvillea really got under her skin when she came across it on a trip to Tanzania in 2011. However Kelly-Jean says that if she had the room to plant whatever she wanted, it would be deciduous trees. She is constantly entranced by their changing faces through time; and says that the range is too vast to attempt a list of favourites!

Kelly-Jean has travelled widely, in search of inspirational gardens. This has provided a range of ideas that she can apply to her landscaping trade, such as the importance of a strong structure, or "bones" to a garden. Some of her travels were enabled by winning the Young Horticulturalist of the Year in 2013.

Kelly-Jean's presentation after the Annual General Meeting will relate to her very recent visit to the biennial Singapore Garden Festival, which will include the dazzling Singapore Orchid Show. There will be further details in the newspapers in the week leading up to the AGM. The presentation will be at 7.30pm on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> August, at the Davis Lecture Theatre in Watt Street.



Bason  
botanic gardens trust

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