

Bason botanic gardens trust

winter 2017 newsletter

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THE SPRING WALK

Diana Loader

The daffodils are emerging near the road at the top of the daffodil bowl. These are the white and gold early jonquils and the golden Malvern and Carlton daffodils are open in the centre of the bowl.

Daffodils were planted more than 20 years ago. Large full circles, each of 100 bulbs, were spread out amongst the poplars, early, mid-season and late. Frilled trumpet Ice Follies, yellow and orange cupped Falstaffs and Indian Maid are very vigorous. By the gazebo, the pink cups next to the Acacias are the last to flower.

The season seems to be running early, at the time of writing we haven't had a frost yet and mid-July promises a full early show of hundreds of daffodils in full sun.

Planted as single bulbs, each is now a strong clump of more than a dozen stems. They have never been lifted, they are very healthy and when we lift them in January/February we could separate 30 to 50 bulbs per clump ready to be spread out along the spring walk and down to the Camellia Garden.

I visit them early and late, from July to September, to enjoy the huge range in all their glory.

It is a unique feature of Bason Botanic Gardens to drive around the curves and undulations of our specimen trees right to the heart of our massed spring display. By the time the cherries and magnolias bloom, this is a breathtaking and fragrant picture.

Replacements in the Camellia Gardens are growing well. The white japonica Kate Shepherd is noteworthy and the two Jury hybrids, Mimosa and Elsie Jury, show a lot of yellow. The exquisite miniature species *Transkoenensis* fills a gap in the hybrid section.

Steps are being taken to replace the Kowhai collection, planted in memory of Harry Cave, on the bank above the fern house. We have scoured the country to obtain three South Island kowhais from the Ministry of Works' nursery on Banks Peninsula, while Springvale Nursery supplied the local Wanganui species *Godleii*, the weeping kowhai, and *Microphyllia*, with its dainty foliage. The tall Taupo *Macrophyllia* was located in Taupo and they will hover over the white daisies and grevillea which are holding the bank display at present.

All trees will be labelled.





FROM THE CHAIR

I was going to write that the transition from autumn to early winter is my favourite time at the gardens, but realised that any and every time is my favourite time. It just happens to be early winter now, and now is beautiful.

Since its inception many dedicated people have worked to make the "Bason" the place of beauty, tranquillity and service to plants and the community of Whanganui that it has become. I say service to the community because, ultimately, that is what it's all about and what it needs to deliver.

Since 1970, when the gardens were donated to the city of Whanganui by Blanche and Stanley Bason, they have matured through various phases of plantings, capital works and the efforts of the district council, contractors and volunteers to a point where they are now quite clearly a tremendous asset for community of Whanganui. As chair of the Bason Botanic Trust Board I believe it is imperative that this asset is recognised, utilised and appreciated by as many and as wide a cross section of our community as possible for recreation, education and simple pleasure.

As we continue to develop the gardens we must also develop the connection to our community. We must bring people closer to plants and demonstrate their benefits and vital importance to our healthy lives. We must show how we rely on each other, people and plants together.

The Board is currently reviewing the gardens' strategic plan. This is a substantial review which will result in defining how we further develop the "Bason" and how this wonderful botanic garden's relationship with, and benefit to, the Whanganui community grows.

I encourage you all to visit the "Bason" more often, consider what you see, reflect on what a great place

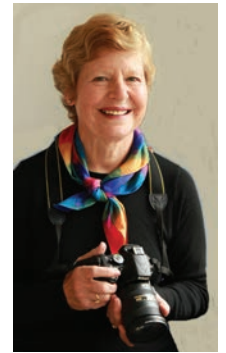
it is and, perhaps, reflect upon how you could be involved in its future. Maybe the first step will be to attend our AGM at the Davis Lecture Theatre this August 10th at 7.00pm. This will be followed at 7:30pm by a photographic presentation of the gardens from Beverley Sinclair.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the AGM and wishing you a wonderful winter in the garden.

Terry Dowdeswell
Chair, Bason Botanic Gardens Trust Board

FLORA AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Long-time Bason Botanic Gardens supporter Beverley Sinclair is the guest speaker at this year's AGM, sharing her experiences and thoughts on Flora and Photography.



Beverley came to Whanganui in the mid-1960s and soon became involved with the Bason through her association with Phil Thomsen and Vonnie Cave.

She has been a member of the Board and set up and edited the newsletter. She designed the Bason's first website in the 1980s and produced a timeline of the Gardens' history.

Beverley's interest in photography led her to keep a photographic record of the development of the Bason, documenting the many changes and enhancements over the years.

Although a keen gardener, Beverley says she had no botanical knowledge when she first became involved with the Bason.

Her presentation at the AGM will reflect on her journey as a keen photographer of flora, including her association with the Bason Botanic Gardens. Please come along to enjoy what is sure to be a fascinating insight into Beverley's work.

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

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NEW WALKWAY TO THE JAPANESE TEA HOUSE

Phil Thomsen

People visiting the Gardens at present will notice that contractors from W&W are operating near the Japanese Tea House.

This is an exciting project which has been initiated by the Board and has been enabled through a generous bequest. We should point out that few of the capital works at the Gardens are funded by the ratepayers of Whanganui – they are mainly financed by bequests or donations.

The Japanese Tea House was a wonderful donation to the Gardens from our sister city, Nagaizumi-cho. It had earlier been a cultural feature in Wanganui East; however, in 2015 it was transported to the Gardens and placed on a peninsula of the lake – an iconic setting.

The Board, Whanganui District Council (WDC) and contractors have been working hard to get the Tea House fully functioning for cultural activities and integrated with the rest of the Gardens. A landscaping plan was drawn up by former Board member Kelly Jean Kerr, in conjunction with Clive Higgie, and planting was carried out by Board members, contractors and the WDC Community Project Team. It will still take several more years for this landscaping to mature; however, the vision is gradually emerging.

One issue that faced the Board is access to the Tea House. There is very little scope for parking adjacent to the site - and even if parking was available nearby it wouldn't lend itself to the "contemplative walk" leading to the tea ceremony that is part of the cultural experience. The nearest place with adequate space for parking is the closest section of the Picnic Flat (more or less opposite the double covered barbecues). However, access from there has been an issue. One either walks on the ring road or down a

Annual General Meeting

The AGM of Bason Botanic Gardens Trust will take place at the Davis Lecture Theatre, Watt Street, at 7.00pm on Thursday, 10 August 2017.

The AGM will be followed at 7.30pm by a presentation by Beverley Sinclair who will share her experiences in Flora and Photography (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.

steep bank. The Board resolved to turn this problem into an opportunity by making the area beside the ring road into an attractive walkway.

Planning work was done through several designers, starting with Isthmus Group who have worked on a number of projects in conjunction with the Board. This design work took longer than anticipated as there was a wish to keep the cost within reasonable bounds. However... finally the work has begun. The new walkway will be separated from the road, will be an easy gradient and will feature two viewing platforms. There is method in this: the walkway will have stunning viewpoints across the lake towards the Tea House and across the road to the wetlands. Plus it will encourage a leisurely and thoughtful passage for those invited to a tea ceremony.

There is another benefit to this project. One of the targets of the Board's current strategic plan is to complete an "around the lake" walk. The Alexander Terraces and walkway adjacent to the weir are a significant existing part of this. However, one of the most difficult remaining parts is the section leading to the Tea House. Therefore, once the walkway is finished, completion of the full trail should be relatively straightforward. I say "relatively" since some of the land behind the lake is very steep and the trail will have to rise significantly to bypass this but it should lead to some spectacular viewpoints.

The Board and Council appreciate the patience of visitors while works are continuing; however, the end result should be exciting and very worthwhile.

WHAT OUR VISITORS THINK ABOUT BASON BOTANIC GARDENS

Wendy Bainbridge

Bason Botanic Gardens received a resounding thumbs-up from people who commented in the latest Park Check survey undertaken by the Whanganui District Council.

The Council does surveys in various Whanganui parks every year. The Park Check surveys are undertaken by a number of councils throughout New Zealand so there is an opportunity to benchmark against councils of similar size. Information we receive from the surveys helps us to determine what we are doing right and what we might want to do differently.

It also gives us some information for budgeting purposes which is particularly relevant this year when we are looking to put together a 10-year plan.

Thirty surveys are undertaken at each destination park included in the survey. They are intercept surveys so they capture people who are visiting Bason at the time of the survey.

The survey asks people to rate out of 5 the

importance and satisfaction with various aspects of our parks including: gardens and trees, seats and tables, toilets, signage, cleanliness, grass maintenance, paths and tracks, shade, security and accessibility.

For Bason, the importance that people placed on these aspects was close to, or exceeded, their satisfaction levels.

They were then asked to give an overall satisfaction rating.

Overall satisfaction for Destination Parks (Bason Botanic Gardens, Virginia Lake Reserve, Kowhai Park, Castlecliff Domain) was 98.3%.

Overall satisfaction for Bason Botanic Gardens was 100%.

The most common theme that came through in the comments section was that people would like to see more plant labels.

What do you think? If you have some suggestions on how we could do things better, please contact me wendye.bainbridge@gmail.com

CLIVIA NEWS – POSSIBILITIES BEING EXPLORED

Kevin Luff

As the years go by Bason Botanic Gardens continues to change with new developments being added all the time, such as barbeques, the Japanese Tea House and sculptures. They all add a new dimension to the park helping to make Bason Botanic Gardens an ideal place for everyone to visit and enjoy.

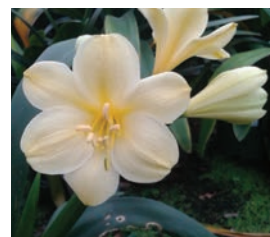
On the botanical side, the plants are changing and maturing and new habitats are being created around these plantings. An example of this is the arboretum on the top flat – trees are now well-established with substantial shade areas underneath. Seeing this

new habitat develop gave me the idea of suggesting to the Board this is an ideal site to plant Clivia. Also the possibility of mass planting Clivia would create an attraction of similar interest to visitors as the spring walk offers but at a different time of year, namely October – November.

There are two main groups of Clivia which we are interested in planting. The first is a Clivia species collection with named habitat varieties from different parts of South Africa. Dr Keith Hammett has the best botanical collection of Clivia in the world outside South Africa, put together over many years and meticulously recorded. Dr Keith has kindly offered examples of his collection, virtually free of charge, and is very keen to get them preserved at the Bason Botanic Gardens. Sadly, his property in Auckland is coming under pressure from housing developments, making it even more imperative these plants are preserved at Bason.

The second group is plantings of the new modern Clivia Miniata hybrids, which over the last 5-10 years have improved enormously with a variety of colours now becoming available. However, they have yet to reach the retail market. I have a large collection of such hybrids in my nursery and have offered to supply plants, at cost, to Bason. These types of Clivia are obviously not of botanical interest but are very showy and, if mass planted, would add a new attraction to the park.

So far, planting of more Clivia at Bason Botanic Gardens is still at the planning stage but I think they would be a great asset for the future.



Bason
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