

The Auckland Garden

Newsletter of the Auckland Botanic Gardens and Friends

September 2025

The AGM Issue



Cover image: *the red cabbage*

The painting© (slightly cropped) on the front cover of this issue of the newsletter is of the red cabbage (*Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata* f. *rubra*) by Jennifer Duval-Smith. This won the People's Choice Award at the Botanical Art Worldwide 2025 Exhibition at the Botanic Gardens.

The note beside the painting read: "The humble cabbage is an ancient form of sustenance for human beings, it demands little but delivers much, which is why it has spread all around the world from its native origin in the Mediterranean. The anthocyanins responsible for the spectacular colouration of the red cabbage reflect the pH levels of the soil in which it is grown, providing a wonderfully

varied subject for the artist."

Jennifer Duval-Smith is an Auckland-based botanical watercolour artist (www.jenniferduval-smith.com or [@jenniferduvalsmithart](https://www.instagram.com/jenniferduvalsmithart)). She currently works at the Auckland Domain Winter Gardens, teaching and painting a range of fascinating and unusual plants there. She also teaches a regular course in botanical watercolours at Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery. In 2021 she was the Friends' Visiting Artist.

Cards of the red cabbage (and some other paintings in the exhibition) are available at the Visitor Centre.

Inside back cover image

Manu Torino by the late Fred Graham - photograph Greg Meylan.

According to the book *Fred Graham: creator of forms* (a copy is in the Botanic Gardens library), birds were a favourite subject for him. The sculpture *Manu Torino* at the entrance to Huakaiwaka (the Visitor Centre) is inspired by a flock of birds startled into flight. It consists of one hundred stainless steel birds welded together. The sculpture also honours the location of the Gardens, as Manurewa translates to "flying birds".

Refer to article on Mr Graham by Jack Hobbs, page 26.



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**Auckland
Botanic Gardens**
102 Hill Road,
Manurewa,
Auckland, 2105

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Contributions to the newsletter are welcome

Material for the December 2025
issue should be submitted by
3 p.m. Friday 7 November 2025
Ross Ferguson, Barbara
Wheeler editors, Kim Stretton
formatter.

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Images

Front cover: *Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata* f. *rubra* by Jennifer Duval-Smith
Inside back cover, on the left: Spring flowering plants at the Gardens - *Magnolia* 'Honey
Tulip', *Rhododendron* 'Dame Nellie Melba' and *Clematis* 'Apple Blossom'; on the right:
Manu Torino by Fred Graham

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Welcome back Bec



Introducing Bec Stanley, new Manager, Auckland Botanic Gardens, Domain Winter Gardens and Platt Arboretum

My connection to plants began early, growing up in the shadow of the “Coronation Oak”—a majestic tree planted in 1902 on the grounds of Duart House in Havelock North. I collected acorns from this ancient giant, growing my own oak seedlings and taking one with us when we moved, growing in a repurposed honey container.

My parents are passionate home gardeners who grew most of our vegetables,

with their yearly harvest of beefsteak tomatoes as our seasonal highlight. I curated my own herb garden, collecting every culinary herb I could find, reading about their uses and properties. When my parents gave me control of a bed in our front garden, I chose *Plumbago* as my centrepiece—those delicate blue flowers becoming my first real horticultural statement, though it taught me an early lesson about considering mature plant size when it outgrew its space!

I studied ecology at Victoria University in Wellington, gravitating toward botany and adding more plant papers each year. I completed my degree with a postgraduate project studying a rare high alpine forget-me-not (*Myosotis oreophila*) in the northern Dunstan Mountains of Central Otago—an experience that sparked my enduring fascination with New Zealand's native forget-me-nots.

My career began as a threatened plant botanist for the Department of Conservation in Auckland, surveying and managing plants across Aotea, Hauturu, and other Gulf Islands. I jumped from helicopters, leapt on and off moving boats, and camped on remote seabird islands for weeks at a time. It was an exhilarating introduction to conservation work. It was in that job I first met Jack Hobbs and Steve Benham, who introduced me to the Auckland Botanic Gardens around 1997.

Jack and Steve were establishing the Gardens' role in native plant conservation and invited me to join an ex-situ network. Later, they invited me to help them plan

the Native Threatened Plant Garden. I immediately understood the vital opportunity to connect in-situ and ex-situ conservation actions—a partnership essential for plant conservation since no single agency oversees both approaches.

From 2006, I had stints as a Biosecurity Community Coordinator, Parks Ecologist and Plant Ecologist for (then) Auckland Regional Council until the changeover to Auckland Council when I moved into a policy role as a Principal Specialist for Natural Heritage, Environment Strategy and Policy.

In 2012 I saw a job advert for an Education and Partnerships Specialist at the Botanic Gardens. It was serendipity really, I knew Jack, I knew the threatened plant work and had worked with the team in the past. I thought – “that might be a nice place to work!” I was also attracted to being in a public-facing role again, and I've always been passionate about education. It was one of those sliding door moments. I remember the moment in the first few weeks of the role when it clicked that I worked in a place where EVERYONE liked plants. I had spent my career to date convincing funders, managers, community, developers, consultants, public that plants were important. Finally, I had landed in a place where I realized I didn't need to keep convincing my colleagues plants were critical. It was a bit like I'd found my people. In 2013 I moved to the role of Curator of the Botanic Gardens.

I left the Gardens in 2021 for a role in the Auckland Council Environmental Services team as a Principal Advisor guiding the support work from Council to grow community-led ecological restoration.

What I Bring to This Role

I'm committed to maintaining our position as a beloved visitor destination. The role of the Auckland Botanic Gardens is to connect people with nature, and the more visitors we welcome, the more people we can inspire with the plants and plant combinations they encounter here. That's real influence in action.

I also want to expand our conservation impact by finding new ways to resource this work while building stronger partnerships with Mana Whenua. My leadership style is fundamentally collaborative—I believe we achieve the best results when everyone's voice is heard. Rather than making decisions in isolation, I want to tap into our collective knowledge and experience, connecting people across different areas and helping remove barriers that might prevent us from “putting this show on every day”.

I want to continue, and extend, Jack's legacy in sustainable gardening. We have a crucial role in leading this, and that might mean trialling new ways to do things that bring their own challenges for the way we work, and what we display.

Looking Forward

One of my greatest motivations is our connection with visitors – if council has a “shop window” this is an important one. We can see the joy the Gardens brings every day. I'm also energised by our role in the broader Botanic Gardens network, both nationally and internationally. It's a unique community where we learn from and inspire each other.

I see horticulture as an increasingly vital career as more and more people recognise nature's benefits for urban wellbeing.

Green infrastructure needs plants and people with plant knowledge—skills that will be essential as we adapt to climate challenges, including more frequent heavy rainfall events.

I want to acknowledge the extraordinary support of the Friends as something quite remarkable in the Council landscape. The career opportunities I've had through the Friends' support—visiting gardens worldwide and connecting with networks, particularly in Australia—are truly unique.

Looking ahead, one of our biggest challenges will be infrastructure: ensuring our facilities serve not just current needs but the next generation of staff and visitors. Many of our buildings have served us well for over 50 years, but we need to ask whether they're still fit for purpose in our rapidly changing world. Our recent land acquisitions offer exciting possibilities but require fresh thinking about resourcing and creating spaces that are welcoming, functional, and future-ready.

I'm also focused on our aspiration to be a world-class botanic garden. While we're rightly proud of our popularity and visitor appreciation, I believe we can grow further in conservation, research and education. This isn't criticism—it's a call to action. With our expanded land area, we have unprecedented potential to be bold, inventive, and strategic.

Equally important is building genuine relationships with Mana Whenua, embedding Indigenous knowledge and values into our work, and recognizing that botanic gardens can be powerful places of cultural connection and education alongside botanical excellence.

Beyond the Gardens

After 27 years with the Auckland Botanical Society—including serving as President—I recently chose to step back, believing strongly that leadership shouldn't be held indefinitely. Organisations need fresh voices and perspectives to grow and thrive.

I co-lead a local conservation group in Birkenhead, where I live beside the stunning natural corridor of Le Roys Bush which extends from saltmarsh and freshwater wetland up through riparian bush to the Shore's highest point, connecting the reserve and private bush-covered backyards. Our group works with residents whose properties border this corridor, helping control invasive weeds and pests while building a social network that welcomes newcomers. We pride ourselves on making conservation accessible and enjoyable—there's always tea and cake at our weeding bees!

If pressed to choose a favourite plant group, native forget-me-nots would be near the top of my list. During my university research, I discovered that the last person to study them had been Dr Lucy Moore, who wrote several volumes of the Flora of New Zealand. This led me to write an essay on women New Zealand taxonomists, which introduced me to the remarkable work of Dr Joan Dingley. At the Department of Conservation, I surveyed the Auckland coastal forget-me-not *Myosotis pansa* subsp. *pansa* and was involved in its renaming in 2013.

I'm excited to return to this role and work alongside all of you who make this special place possible.

Bec Stanley, Manager

Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens 2025 Annual General Meeting Notice

The 42nd Annual General Meeting of the Friends
will be held on Saturday 18 October 2025 at 2.00 p.m.
in the Friends Building at the Auckland Botanic Gardens, 102 Hill Road, Manurewa.

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All Friends are encouraged to attend the AGM and to nominate candidates for election to the Executive Committee. You may wish to stand yourself. Nomination forms are enclosed with this newsletter or may be obtained from the Administrator (email: friendsofabg@gmail.com).

Please remember that only current financial members may nominate or vote.

Nominees must certify in writing that they are not disqualified from being a member of the committee as outlined in Clause 6.2 of the Constitution: Qualifications of Officer. This is a requirement of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. Electronic copies of the certificate are available from the Administrator.

AGM programme

2.00 p.m.
AGM, Friends and Volunteers Building. Please bring this issue of *The Auckland Garden* with you as it contains the agenda and reports.

3.00 p.m.
Talk by Mich Newton (Visitor Services Manager) and Barbara Wheeler (Curator) on their trip, funded by the Buchanan Award, to Singapore to attend and speak at the 8th Global Botanic Gardens Conservation International Conference.

The meeting will be followed by drinks and nibbles. For catering purposes, please RSVP to friendsofabg@gmail.com if you will be attending the AGM and the social event to follow.

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Election of officers

The retiring 2024-2025 Executive Committee is as follows:

President	Viv Canham	Graham Hauer
Vice President	Cleone Campbell	Heather Hine
Past President	Liz Powell	Simon James (co-opted)
Treasurer	Linda Christie	Linden Johnson
Secretary	Barbara Harvey	Ex officio Rebecca Stanley
Committee	Chris Allen	(Group Manager, Botanic Gardens)
	Deidre Barry	
	Ross Ferguson	Administration Irene Horton
	Dianne Glenn	

AGM agenda

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| 1. President's introduction | 9. Conflicts of interest disclosed |
| 2. Apologies | 10. Presentation of Friends Birthday Gift to the Gardens |
| 3. Minutes of the 41st Annual General Meeting held on 28 September 2024 | 11. Friends Buchanan Award |
| 4. Matters arising | 12. Election of Officers |
| 5. Presentation of President's Annual Report | 13. Election of Life Members |
| 6. Presentation of Annual Accounts | 14. Gardens Report |
| 7. Motion of thanks to the Auditor | 15. Revision of Constitution |
| 8. Appointment of Auditor | 16. General Business |
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Proposed change to the constitution

That the second paragraph of the existing clause 6.8: Indemnity for Officers

No member of the Committee shall be liable for the acts or defaults of any other member of the Committee or any loss occasioned thereby, unless occasioned by their wilful default or by their wilful acquiescence.

The members of the Committee shall be indemnified by the Society for all liabilities and costs incurred by them in the proper performance of the functions and duties, other than as a result of their wilful default.

be deleted and replaced by the new paragraph:

The Society may indemnify and/or obtain insurance for an Officer for: (a) liability (other than criminal liability) for a failure to comply with: (i) a duty under section 54 to 61 of the Act (Officers' duties); or (ii) any other duty imposed on an Officer in their capacity as an Officer of the Society; and/or (b) costs incurred by the Officer for any claim or proceeding related to a liability. The Society may indemnify or obtain insurance for an Officer, Member or employee in accordance with the Act.

Moved V. Canham, seconded C. Campbell

2024 AGM minutes

Minutes of the 41st Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens Inc. held in the Friends Building at the Auckland Botanic Gardens on Saturday 28 September 2024 at 2.00 p.m.

1. Vice President's welcome: Cleone Campbell welcomed the 33 Friends and visitors present and thanked Jack Hobbs and Barbara Myron for coordinating the reserved car parking.
2. Apologies: Viv Canham, Judi and Garry Hadfield, Dick and Eleanor Lane, Hazel Jennings, Christine Brouwers, Helen Higgot, Anne Price, Holly Powley, Stella Cattle and Shirley Bedford. Moved that the apologies be accepted – R. Ferguson/M. Burrill – Carried.
3. Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting held on 28 October 2023: These were circulated with the agenda and other reports as part of the September 2024 issue of *The Auckland Garden*. The following amendments were required –
 - Clause 12 to be amended – Secretary is B. Harvey
 - The committee – B. Harvey deleted and replaced by D. Barry
 - Clause 13 to be amended – The Auckland Council representatives – Cr C. Fletcher, Auckland Council and A. Cunningham-Marino, Manurewa Local BoardMoved that the minutes as circulated and as amended be taken as read and accepted as a true record – C. Campbell/D. Glenn – Carried.
4. Matters arising: There were no matters arising.
5. The President's Annual Report: This was circulated in the September 2024 issue of *The Auckland Garden*. Cleone Campbell noted that Viv Canham has put so much energy and time into making the Friends a vibrant and inspiring group of people who add so much to enhance the beautiful Botanic Gardens and Viv's drive and enthusiasm greatly contribute to the vibrancy and wellbeing of the Friends.

Cleone Campbell requested the committee members to stand and introduce themselves. She also acknowledged all the volunteers who help the Gardens to flourish in so many ways alongside the dedicated, inspiring and amazing staff. Moved that the President's Report be accepted – C. Campbell/D. Glenn – Carried.

Cleone Campbell noted that the Growing Friends are constantly reminded of the big gumboots to be filled on the loss of Bronwen Rowse. Also, that the most experienced Growing Friends have retired this year – Sue Davison, Averil Stanners and Shona Pitcaithly, who have all contributed greatly to the support that Growing Friends give to the Gardens.

Cleone Campbell also acknowledged Kate Moodie who has contributed so much to

the wellbeing of the Gardens and has been a driving force of the Wiri Rambler with organizing the roster and guiding visitors. Kate Moodie has stepped down from these roles and was presented with a token of the Friends' appreciation.

6. Presentation of Annual Accounts: Linda Christie, the Treasurer, reviewed the content of the annual accounts, copies of which were circulated at the meeting. The finalized report will be on the Charities Register website.

There has been an increase in the Friends' work with both the extra Council activities and exhibitions. Linda thanked the Friends' Administrator, Irene Horton, for doing a great job.

The Dingley Bequest was invested with Hobson Wealth which has merged with Forsyth Barr.

Some of the Rabobank investments have been placed with ASB.

The surplus for the year is enhanced by the grant received from the Council for Sculpture in the Gardens to cover the stipends.

The Debtors figure in the Balance Sheet is the amount owed by Auckland Council as it is an easier accounting exercise for the Friends to pay for one-off events performers on its behalf. Moved that the Annual Accounts be received – L. Christie/D. Glenn – Carried.

7. Thanks to auditor: Moved that the Auditor, Anushka Talpade of BVO, be thanked – L. Christie/L. Johnson – Carried.
8. Appointment of auditor: Moved that Anushka Talpade of BVO be reappointed as auditor, subject to her acceptance – L. Christie/R. Ferguson – Carried.

Dianne Glenn thanked Linda Christie for all her work as Treasurer as it is very time-consuming.

9. Presentation of Friends Birthday Gift to the Gardens: The Friends Executive Committee has approved the Birthday Gift of \$20,000 to be paid to the Gardens for the future North Shore botanic garden project.
10. Friends Buchanan Award: The Award for 2024 of \$12,000 was jointly awarded to Visitor Services Manager Micheline Newton and Curator Barbara Wheeler for them to attend and to present at the Global Botanic Gardens Congress in Singapore. The theme was "Botanic Gardens: People and Plants for a Sustainable Future".
11. Trustees Report: The report was read out by Cleone Campbell: The trustees were consulted once during the year by email to approve spending of up to \$50,000 by the Friends for the management plan to be prepared for the newly purchased land at 120 Hill Road.

At present the trustees must approve expenditure by the committee over \$15,000. In

the proposed new constitution, the Board of Trustees will be replaced with the power of veto vested in the Gardens Manager of any decisions by the committee that the Manager feels are not in the best interests of the Gardens.

The reasoning for this change is that the Manager has more background knowledge of the reason for the expenditure. The objective of the Friends is to promote and support the Gardens, so the new constitution will give the Manager ultimate control over expenditure, and this prevents the possibility of a “rogue” committee spending any funds frivolously.

Viv Canham, as chair of the Trustees, thanks the trustees for their interest, support and service. Moved that the Trustees Report be accepted – C. Campbell/C. Allen – Carried.

Cleone Campbell thanked Dianne Glenn who was retiring from the Board of Trustees and presented a token of the Friends’ appreciation for her support and service as a trustee.

12. Election of Officers:

The list of nominations:

President	V. Canham
Past President	L. Powell
Vice-President	C. Campbell
Treasurer	L. Christie
Secretary	B. Harvey
Committee	C. Allen, D. Barry, R. Ferguson, D. Glenn, G Hauer, H. Hine and L. Johnson

Moved that the nominated Officers and Executive Committee Members as listed be approved – W. Burrill/K. Muller – Carried.

13. Election of Trustees:

Members nominated:

Chair	V. Canham
Treasurer	L. Christie

Two representatives from the Friends Executive Committee:

L. Powell and R. Ferguson

Two co-opted representatives:

G. Hadfield and S. James

Auckland Council representatives,

Cr C. Fletcher Auckland Council and A. Cunningham-Marino Manurewa Local Board

Ex officio J. Hobbs Manager ABG

Secretary I. Horton

Moved that the members as listed be confirmed as Trustees – C. Campbell/L. Lamason – Carried.Carried.

14. Gardens Report: Jack Hobbs spoke to his report which was presented in the September

2024 issue of *The Auckland Garden*.

The Gardens had over a million visitors this year, a significant increase on last year.

In October 2023 Auckland Council purchased 1.6 hectares at 120 Hill Road for \$12.37 million incl GST. The house and outbuildings were deconstructed in March and April and the pool levelled. The unsafe and weedy trees were removed in May and will be used as mulch. The trees along the footpath have been removed and will be replaced with a chain fence covered by *Muehlenbeckia complexa* to screen the property.

Highlights of events during the year – Holding Ground exhibition with 320 artworks by 45 artists, “Eye on Nature”, Mushroom and fungi exhibition, Matariki Festival and Drop and Learns.

7,674 students participated in “Learning Through Experience” programmes.

10 threatened plants were introduced to the Gardens collections.

Many of the staff from the Gardens and the Domain were able to attend conferences. The Domain staff had never been able to attend conferences previously.

J. Hobbs acknowledged the sad passing of Bronwen Rowse and how she is sorely missed. Moved that the Gardens Report be accepted – C. Campbell/R. Ferguson – Carried.

15. Revision of Constitution: Cleone Campbell reiterated the process for adopting the new constitution as detailed in the September 2024 issue of *The Auckland Garden*.

There is a two stage process because the new constitution does not become operative until it is approved by the Registrar. The Friends have to allow for the possibility that the Registrar may require some amendments for approval to be given.

The new constitution had been put on the Gardens website and emailed to members who have supplied their email address. Hardcopies had been posted to those others without a known email address and copies had also been available at the Visitor Centre.

There are some typos in the circulated constitution which are not material but require amendment – clause 1.2 has the incomplete charities reference number and clause 4.1 is repeated unnecessarily.

The motion was put to the meeting: That the draft constitution for the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens Inc that was circulated be adopted subject to the approval of the Registrar of Incorporated Societies. V. Canham/R. Ferguson Carried.

L Powell thanked Viv Canham, Cleone Campbell, Ross Ferguson and Chris Allen for their time in updating the Constitution.

16. General Business: There were no items for General Business.

The meeting closed at 2.40 p.m.

Angela Anstis then spoke about her trip to research edible gardening and community outreach in various gardens in Singapore and United Kingdom which was funded by the Friends’ Buchanan Award. She also gave an overview of her aspirations for further developing these aspects in her role as Curator of the Edible Garden.

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President's report for 2024/2025

The Friends had a very satisfying 2024/25 with a lot of activity and positive outcomes.

The Buchanan Award of \$12,000 was awarded to Mich Newton (Visitor Services Manager) and Barbara Wheeler (Curator) to attend and speak at the 8th Global Botanic Gardens Conservation International Conference in Singapore. Justine Newnham, a horticulturist at the Domain, won the McLeavy Award for an online course “Professional Planting Design”. Justine subsequently visited the donor of the award, Pauline Clarke, who was delighted to meet her. Pauline had donated funds for this award in memory of her friend Shirley McLeavy.

Our birthday gift of \$20,000 was dedicated to the new Platt Arboretum for research and planning and to establish a Friends Group in time. Some of the \$50,000 previously pledged by the Friends for the planning of the new 120 Hill Rd site has been used. The new pā harakeke platform is now underway with the Friends committing \$12,000 to share the cost. \$20,000 was also earmarked for staff development – conferences, work experience outside the Botanic Gardens, etc. \$5,000 went to the Botanical Art

Worldwide exhibition.

This past financial year saw the biennial Sculpture in the Gardens exhibition, majorly funded by Auckland Council. We also provide backing for this event. Regrettably, this time, the Friends made a shortfall of \$10,000. Outside funding was very hard to come by. We are very grateful to our donors, especially Maggie and Bill Burrill – if it wasn’t for their generosity we would have been facing an even bigger shortfall. Once again, record numbers of people visited during the event and feedback was very positive. It is a huge workload for Gardens staff and Friends alike, but it is very valuable as it shines a light on the Botanic Gardens.

Friends purchased the beautiful sculpture *Hand Down* by Amelia & Josh Olley for \$136,500. This piece, which has already attracted huge attention from visitors, will be relocated in the Edibles Garden when the weather allows. The funds for the purchase came from an accumulation of commissions from sales over this and previous Sculpture in the Gardens events.

We received a bequest of \$46,500 from the estate of Josephine Gamble. We are very

grateful and will put the funds to good use. The Friends operates to a large extent on interest received from bequest money which we have invested.

We held many events throughout the year – ‘Friends Day Out’ saw a talk by Jack Hobbs, previous Gardens Manager, on his trip leading a group through Italy. Fabulous photos of wonderful gardens. Ross Ferguson (stalwart Friends Executive member and editor of this newsletter) spoke on the development of kiwifruit – absolutely fascinating. We had a demonstration of cardiac resuscitation from St John, a “pizza & movies” afternoon viewing the Botanic Gardens Australia & New Zealand webinar which I took part in, a terrarium workshop by Volunteer Sara Hayman, a talk by Ross, Eric McKenzie, Sue Davison and Jack Hobbs on Joan Dingley who was one of the pivotal people on the Botanic Gardens coming into being. Meg Spittal (Gardens staff) spoke on her experience working at Dunedin Botanic Garden and we visited the new Platt Arboretum.

Our Spring Bus Trip, organised by Committee member Barbara Harvey, was to the Coatesville gardens of Mincher, Totara Waters and Rosie Lea.

We held a staff appreciation morning tea and our always popular Soup Day, run by the ever-efficient Liz Powell.

January came with two major news items – Jack Hobbs decided to retire after 48 years’ service and Rosemary Platt so very generously gave the Platt Arboretum to the Council on the proviso that it is managed by the Auckland Botanic Gardens. Not only that, but she bought the sculpture *Moo* from the Sculpture in the Gardens exhibition. *Moo* now greets you as you enter the property.

Although we couldn’t imagine the Gardens

without Jack, Bec Stanley has taken up the role with aplomb and I’m sure she’ll put her own stamp on the place in time.

We were relieved when the Registrar of Incorporated Societies approved the new constitution as required by the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. As well as meeting the requirements of the Act, we simplified the structure of the Society by removing the need for trustees and providing for the Manager of the Gardens to have a veto on decisions of the Society that were considered by Auckland Council not to be in the best interests of the Gardens. We thank all previous trustees for their help. Inevitably, the new constitution will probably require some fine tuning.

Thank you to the hardworking Friends executive committee members particularly our Vice-President Cleone Campbell, Treasurer Linda Christie and Administrator Irene Horton. Thank you all for your ongoing support in overseeing the library, Wiri Rambler, Growing Friends, the website, health & safety, the newsletter, Friends Day Out, etc.

A big thank you to all the Friends members and Volunteers who raise money for ventures such as those mentioned above. Growing Friends and Wiri Rambler team – we are very grateful for the work you do.

Thanks to the people who man the library. Thanks to all the Volunteers who work with the Gardens staff to make the Gardens such a wonderful place to visit. And a huge thank you to Bec Stanley, the new Gardens Manager, and her team who work tirelessly in all weathers. We are honoured to be able to support you.

My three years term as President will come to a close at the AGM in October. I’ve certainly enjoyed my time and have extended my

skills and experiences – organised and addressed meetings, attended hui, spoken on a webinar, met wonderful people, developed editorial skills publishing the ‘Just Between Friends’ news-sheet. During my term I wanted to provide more events for members to enjoy and to provide more communication. I hope I have achieved this. Membership has risen from around 250 to 350 in the past three years, so I hope that some of my initiatives have helped with this.

And I round off this report with – twenty years ago:

- Graeme Hauer (ex President and present workshop Volunteer) started at the Gardens
- Prince Charles opened the Potter Children’s Garden
- Helen Clarke opened the Huakaiwaka Visitors’ Centre

How about that!

Regards, Viv Canham

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Auckland Botanic Gardens - Annual report 2024/2025

This annual report covers Botanic Gardens activities from 1 July 2024 until 30 June 2025.

As I joined the Gardens in only the last month of this reporting year, I am very grateful for the comprehensive monthly reports prepared by Jack Hobbs, supplemented by information from the wider team.

our analysis showed an exceptionally high return on investment for volunteering at the Botanic Gardens – higher than other council departments – this economic measure only captures part of the story.

Annual visitation to the Gardens was 1,079,576 peaking in November with 135,000 visitors that month, coinciding with the spring blossom and opening of Sculpture in the Gardens.

For us, volunteers on site are essential support for our work. We simply couldn't accomplish what we do without volunteers many of whom are Friends. Beyond this practical necessity, you add immense value through the services you provide to visitors—through the Growing Friends, the Wiri Rambler, and countless other contributions including facilitating fabulous art exhibitions in the Visitor Centre.

Perhaps the most significant event this year was receiving the extremely generous gift from Rosemary Platt: 5.63 hectares at Greenhithe, donated on 28 February and publicly announced on Friday 7 March. This addition expands the Botanic Gardens portfolio significantly.

Events

The ninth exhibition for Sculpture in the Gardens in partnership with the Friends was held 16 November 2024 to 2 March 2025. This event continues to attract a large audience, and it was no different for this most recent event where 368,000 visitors enjoyed 15 large scale artworks along a 1.5 km trail plus an indoor exhibition of small-scale works. There was also a 3-month programme of varying art-based activities

Friends & Volunteers

Volunteers are crucial to our work and this year's volunteer total came in at an impressive 7,295 hours with an additional 1,000 hours from the Friends committee. We recently contributed to a volunteering report for the Council's Community Committee across council services. While

for both children and adults to participate in throughout the exhibition.

A survey reported that for 59% of the respondents the main reason for visiting the Gardens was the exhibition, underlining the value this event has regarding visitation to the Gardens. *Hand Down* (by Josh and Amelia Olley), the Friends acquisition, was also the People's Choice and Supreme Award winner and will be sited at the entrance to the Edible Garden in due course. This season, five outdoor sculptures were sold plus two commissioned works. Sculpture in the Gardens could not be run without the generous support from the Friends.

This year's calendar was packed with highlights, including the unforgettable release of 1,400 Monarch butterflies during the closing event of Sculpture in the Gardens in March with 100 butterflies tagged to support a national tracking programme. February saw Opera in the Gardens bring the magic of arias and ensemble pieces to thousands as part of the Council's Music in Parks series, while June's Matariki Festival Day (on Friday 20 June) drew upwards of 5,000 attendees for a vibrant celebration of kapa haka, live music, art, and whānau-focused activities, delivered in partnership with Ngāti Tamaoho. This not only received enthusiastic community and media praise but also underscored the values of collaboration, cultural connection, and accessibility at the heart of the Gardens' work.

Displays

It was again delightful to host an exhibition as part of the Botanical Art Worldwide series (March – June 2025), with the New Zealand exhibition titled *Our Plants - Past, Present and Future/O tātou Tipu o Mua - o Ināianei me te Āpōpō*, and the associated program of workshops, demonstrations and a lecture from Dr Nick Roskrue. Forty works were

on display as well as a screen connecting visitors with digital images from the rest of the world's art works.

Displays in the Visitor Centre over the past year included a living roof exhibition at the same time as the World Green Infrastructure Congress (September 2024) and featured a volunteer-built shed roof, dog kennels, and bird boxes planted with succulents and natives to show visitors how green infrastructure manages stormwater. The display also impressed the international delegates of the congress who visited as part of their field trip.

Other displays included a native planting for native pollinators showcase curated by Meg Spittal, one of our talented apprentices who is now a Horticulturist. Visitors were also treated to a striking exhibition of photographs taken in the Gardens by members of the Manukau Photographic Society, alongside vibrant and playful entries from the Eye on Nature Creative Arts exhibition. Run by the Manukau Beautification Trust, this exhibition featured artworks crafted from sustainable and repurposed materials by kindergartens and primary schools in South and East Auckland, all exploring the theme: *Act Local – What's in your backyard?*

A temporary outdoor exhibition featuring large-scale globes created by artist Ruth Watson entitled *Other Worlds* was exhibited in September 2024, inviting visitors to explore alternative worldviews through unconventional mapping, from carbon data to gravitational analysis. Their sci-fi-inspired scale and design captivated visitors and offered a fresh perspective on our planet's representation.

Plants and Gardens

Master planning for 120 Hill Road has commenced with generous support and

involvement from the Friends. The land will be developed in partnership with Mana Whenua to create a māra (garden) that is fundamentally grounded in Te Ao Māori values and worldview. This approach is a very different way of working, learning from Mana Whenua about a garden that is indigenous in its philosophy and value system, treating the māra not as a commodity but as a sacred connection to the whenua (land). The garden is expected to incorporate traditional practices including storytelling about different atua, following maramataka (lunar calendar) and Matariki cycles for planting, and maintaining tikanga (customs) around harvesting and management.

In a bold effort to protect a mature rimu teetering on the edge of the Puhinui Stream, in winter 2024, our team tackled severe bank erosion caused by years of dog access and high stream flows from the increasingly common storm events. Using EcoCoir socks to stabilise the soil, followed by native replanting and fencing, we hope this innovative intervention will give the tree – and the stream – a chance to recover, though the outcome remains uncertain and off-leash dog use (in an on-leash area) continues despite signage and support from Council's Animal Control team.

Renewals

Perhaps the most exciting renewal came in October 2024 with the removal of five power pylons from the decommissioned line between Hill Road and the Gondwana Arboretum.

The Programmes team with the assistance of Collection Curator Joanna Mason replaced the old ponga wall with a stunning new macrocarpa wall in the New Zealand Rose Garden.

As reported in last year's Annual Report,

theft of some parts of Richard Mathieson's *Reservoirs* sculpture precipitated a review of its location in the Perennial Garden. One of the very talented collection curators, Jeff Jones, proposed a design to incorporate the sculpture into a more intimate setting of the Perennial Garden. Stonework was completed in autumn and preparations are currently underway for installing the solar panels needed to get the sculpture working.

To support the services the concessionaire needed to trade, power and water supplies were added near the Depot and Urban Trees. This meant that the concessionaire could be relocated from the lawn beside the Historic Rose Garden to a more appropriate location.

In October 2024 contractors completed resealing of the main pathway between Trials and Pā Harakeke.

Following the wayfinding review, the Visitor Centre team installed signs from the final phase of the wayfinding updates as part of our refreshed branding rollout. Key achievements included installing the two new Hill Road entrance signs, ten new garden orientation maps on wooden footings, updating directional signage throughout the Gardens, and refreshing the Growing Friends signage with a new Nursery gate sign and Hill Road motorway off-ramp corner sign.

Education

7543 students attended the Botanic Gardens Experience Centre from 87 schools, plus an additional 432 teachers and 1349 adult helpers during the year. Of note, 378 students participated in the new Spongy Schools Spongy Cities programme, which has been designed to increase understanding around permeable and impermeable surfaces and water-sensitive design, to help build climate resilience

in young people. The most popular programme (1341 students) was “Create Your Own Garden”, which introduces students to the wonders of gardening through a range of hands-on activities in our children’s garden.

This year’s Eye on Nature focused on the conservation of the Puhinui Forest and Te Puhinui Awa, bringing together the community to celebrate and learn about these vital natural spaces. This is a wonderful partnership event with the Manukau Beautification Trust, with Gardens and wider council staff and environmental stakeholder groups supporting the event. The program successfully engaged 1,231 school children, with the invaluable assistance of 50 volunteers and 237 adult helpers.

We ran 115 education-based events and activities from Drop and Learns, to Meet the Gardener sessions, and from the nature-based school holiday programmes to guided walks.

Conservation and Research

Over the year we have, in partnership with Auckland Council’s Environmental Services, Auckland War Memorial Museum, the Department of Conservation and Mana Whenua expanded the ex-situ collection held at the Botanic Gardens.

New to collection:

- *Libertia flaccidifolia*
- *Taeniophyllum northlandicum*
- *Carex litorosa*
- *Pseudowintera insperata* – these will all be returned to Mana Whenua in Whangarei Heads to support the wild population
- *Asplenium hookerianum* var. *colensoi* - not threatened outside Auckland, but this is the first record in the region

Added wild-collected material:

- *Leptinella rotundata*
- *Leptinella tenella*
- *Lophomyrtus obcordata*
- *Hebe speciosa*
- *Korthalsella salicornioides* - seed planted on mānuka in the Threatened Native Plant Garden
- *Coprosma acerosa*

Many of these additions to the collection represent a significant increase in the genetic representation of the material we hold. For example, the *Leptinella rotundata* collection has been built up from two to fourteen individuals. This plant is “Threatened – Nationally Critical” and the wider genetic pool held ex-situ is a huge step towards the conservation of this plant. In October 2024, it was reported at the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network conference that *Pimelea eremitica* / Ngā roimata ō Tohe is now likely extinct in the wild. This is a stark reminder, if we needed it, of the value of having duplicate collections of 15 individuals at Auckland Botanic Gardens and at Maunganui Bluff by Te Rorora which now represents the entire population of this species in New Zealand.

Nursery

We grew 47,000 plants for Parks revegetation and supported the on-Park community nurseries with an additional 20,000 seedlings which volunteers grew on in Parks nurseries for planting.

Toward the end of the year, a structural assessment of the Nursery building confirmed that it requires renewal. We’re now looking ahead and beginning to plan for what comes next, including re-examining our long-standing role in Parks revegetation—a partnership that has spanned over 30 years. We’re eager to work alongside Parks as we explore future possibilities together.

Staff development

In early August 2024, Micheline (Mich) Newton and Barbara Wheeler were awarded the Buchanan Award to attend the Botanic Gardens Conservation International Congress in Singapore. Mich and Barbara will be presenting on the Congress at the upcoming Friends AGM on 18 October 2025.

The Recreation Aotearoa Young Amenity Horticulturist of the Year Sector Final was hosted by Auckland Botanic Gardens in May 2025. This annual competition is developed by a National Working Group led by Recreation Aotearoa and consists of local council staff (including Auckland Botanic Gardens Curator, Barbara Wheeler), horticultural consultants, and contract managers who all have a passion for developing the next generation of amenity horticulture leaders. Our very own Meg Spittal competed this year. However, after Meg's application for the competition was accepted, Meg was also accepted into the Longwood Gardens International Training Program, USA, which meant that during the upcoming Young Horticulturist of the Year National Finals in November 2025, she will not be available to compete. Meg took up the challenge to compete for her own experience and benefit and will be all the better for having done so when she applies for the Sector Final in 2026 on her return from the USA. The eventual winner, River Foster from Wellington City Council, will represent the Amenity Sector at the National Young Horticulturist of the Year Final.

Meg Spittal has been very busy indeed as she undertook a work exchange at Dunedin Botanic Garden thanks to receiving the McLeavy Award from the Friends. As mentioned above, Meg applied for and was successful in being one of ten candidates from around the world accepted into the Longwood Gardens International Training

Program, USA. Meg will be taking a 9-month sabbatical from her horticulturist role at the botanic gardens to take up this placement. We wish Meg well and look forward to her return in May 2026.

Jonathan Corvisy, Greg Meylan, Mich Newton, Jiae Park, Ella Rawcliffe, Tia Sugiura and Barbara Wheeler attended the World Green Infrastructure Congress in September 2024. The conference reinforced the vital role of the Auckland Botanic Gardens as both a research hub for plant selection and ecosystem performance and as a public showcase – our Sustainable Water Trail impressed field trip delegates who saw firsthand how we connect visitors with natural flood management solutions. While New Zealand lacks the advanced policies driving green infrastructure elsewhere we're leading with holistic values, native plant solutions, and collaborative partnerships that the congress celebrated as exemplary.

Jonathan Corvisy, Greg Meylan, Mich Newton and Paul Swift attended the Interpretation Network of New Zealand conference "Waha Kōrero: Sharing Stories" in Auckland in October 2024. The conference speakers conveyed what sharing stories means in Aotearoa today. The Domain Winter Gardens and Botanic Gardens staff hosted two workshops on how to approach interpreting stories and the varying tools we use to do this.

Tia Sugiura, from the Domain Winter Gardens, and Harpreet Singh and Owen Newson, from the Botanic Gardens Nursery, attended the 53rd New Zealand Region International Plant Propagators' Society (IPPS) conference in Timaru in May 2025.

With the New Zealand Gardens Trust conference in Auckland this year, the Friends and Auckland Council supported a larger than usual contingent to attend. From the

Botanic Gardens, Christine Bieleski, Morgan Crecelius, Jeff Jones, Mich Newton, Amy Pollard and Barbara Wheeler attended and from the Domain Winter Gardens, Justine Newnham, Jiae Park, Andro Santos and Andrew Tuarae attended.

Staff

This year, more than most, signalled some significant retirements, most notably Jack Hobbs' retirement from the role of Manager Auckland Botanic Gardens and Auckland Domain Winter Gardens after 48 years, on Friday 25 April 2025. Jack's retirement was celebrated by a wonderful evening event, sponsored by the Friends with 175 people in attendance.

Other retirements were Alan Matthews (known as 'Hippy' to many of us,) Horticulturist in the Programmes area, on 9 May after 40 years' service to the Council, Dave Kerr, Horticulturist, after nearly 12 years of service and Paula Lollback, Collection Curator, on 7 March after 25 years' service. I also acknowledge the departure of Renton Campbell who led the Programmes team and the asset volunteers for 6 years, and Paul Swift who left for Dunedin after 3.5 years.

It's been a year of new beginnings and exciting changes. I stepped into the Manager role about a month after Jack's departure, and over the course of the year, we've welcomed several new team members across our sites: Adalia Edwards joined us as an apprentice; Christine Bieleski came on board as a Visitor Services Representative; Amy Pollard took up a newly created position of Business Development & Events Coordinator; Emma Simpkins rejoined the Gardens team, this time as Education & Partnerships Specialist within Visitor Services; Andro Santos started at the Domain; Maree Wiki at the Platt Arboretum; Morgan Crecelius joined as an Apprentice

and Yacek Andreasik as the new Nursery Team Leader based at the Domain Winter Gardens. Yacek takes over from Tracey Finlayson who left earlier this year.

It is also exciting to be able to promote career development in terms of internal promotions: Apprentice Justine Newnham left the Botanic Gardens to start up a role as Horticulturist at Auckland Domain; Meg Spittal, formerly an apprentice, has taken up a full-time position as Horticulturist in the Horticulture team (replacing Dave Kerr); Jodie McDonnell was promoted to a Collection Curator (replacing Paula Lollback).

Domain Winter Gardens

The development of a Domain Winter Gardens Plant Collections Guidelines document to provide a framework for delivery of horticultural services is nearly completed. Emma Oliver has been coordinating the project over the past two years with Jack Hobbs and Site Manager Jonathan Corvisy. Barbara Wheeler held workshops with all the Domain Winter Gardens team to compile the individual collection statements.

The outside garden areas continue to undergo phased renewals. The Rose and Perennial gardens have both had improvements to their design and renewals of plants in line with this.

In the Nursery, Nick Lloyd and Barbara Wheeler have been working on rationalising the plant collections held in the houses. The first step has been to collect data before evaluating it all through a rationalisation lens to ensure there is a parity between what is grown in the Nursery and what is displayed in the tropical and temperate houses.

Bec Stanley,
Manager

Friends Art Group report

As I write this, the sun is shining, casting long shadows in the huge puddles lingering around our property. Magnolias are in bud, and we have a host of daffodils braving the cold.

Since the last AGM, the art group has had another very busy year. Helping out with our exhibitions, enjoying various artist talks and demonstrations and enjoying the camaraderie between members on our alternate monthly meetings. We even got some drawing and painting done!

Throughout the year, artists visit us at alternate meetings to showcase their skills, inspiring and exciting us as we learn new techniques to expand our artistic repertoire. Although we usually rely on artists recommended to us, we are extremely fortunate to have many very talented and generous members of our group prepared to demonstrate and share their skills with us. In fact, all our demonstrations this past year were from our own members.

October saw us gaining valuable tips for our colour pencil work from Irene Horton and Elizabeth Lewis, both art group members.

November was the last meeting of the year, and we had our usual shared Christmas morning tea and trading table. As always, lots of delicious food and last-minute ideas for Christmas gifts were found on our trading table. There was, as always, a gorgeous array of botanical art themed stocking fillers, as well as tubes of paint and other art materials needing a new home. Always a lovely way to end the year.

After a summer break, we had a gentle start to the year with the inspiring Jennifer Duval-Smith treating us to a morning of Nature

Journaling – a very relaxing way to engage with nature and get close up and personal with the gorgeous flowers in bloom at that time of year.

So, with our pages beautifully filled with colour, our April meeting saw Linda Weight taking us through a basic calligraphy script so we could elegantly embellish our pages. Anything that improves my scrawly handwriting is greatly appreciated!

Artist Margaret Routen demonstrated her pastel technique at our June meeting, showing us how she layered her colours for autumnal leaves. By the end of the morning, we had a new appreciation of the colour “brown” and all its variations. We often take brown leaves for granted but once you start to really look.....Wow!

And as for getting our “greens” right – August saw us looking at mixing greens. A colour that is often so hard to get right. We all know what we mean when we say it’s a warm, cool, forest, grey green, a blue green or a bright green – we can describe them but mixing them is another skill we can never practise enough.

The Botanical Art Worldwide 2025 exhibition took up a lot of our members’ time this year either as artists or organisers as did our own annual exhibition. Our exhibition, “Winter to Spring”, held last September and October was very well received, with a very good number of artworks finding new homes around the country. For the first time we had a “People’s Choice” award, sponsored by the Friends, which was very successful. Visitors spent longer in the gallery, looking more carefully at the artworks in order to choose their favourite, which I am sure resulted in more sales.

Do let friends and family know the dates of our next exhibition. We are continuing with the seasons theme and “Spring into Summer” will be in the gallery from Saturday 11 October to Sunday 2 November!

If you are still happy receiving my emails each month, that’s great but if you’d rather

not receive them anymore, just let me know. Likewise, if you think you should be getting them and you aren’t, get in touch too!

As usual, you can email me at lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com or give me a ring or txt me on 021 1617070

Lesley Alexander

Introducing Sam, Maree and Yacek

Introducing Sam Summerfield – new Team Leader, Programmes

I am originally from Hawkes Bay but have resided in Auckland for the past 9 years since returning from a stint in London. I am married with two young sons and a daughter due in October. In my spare time I enjoy getting out and about with my family (including Alma our Labradoodle), running and a round of golf when time permits.

I am qualified in landscape construction and design as well as being a qualified builder. My most recent employment was with Portacom New Zealand as a Project Manager, delivering prefabricated teaching spaces for the Ministry of Education throughout the North Island. I have always been interested in beautiful landscapes and spent many years working for my father’s landscaping and section maintenance business and felt I had the skills and experience being sought in a candidate to contribute to the team at Auckland Botanic Gardens.

I look forward to building on the success of those who have gone before me in this role in creating an inviting space for our wider community to enjoy.

Sam Summerfield



Introducing Maree Wiki – New Horticulturist, Platt Arboretum



Maree Wiki grew up in West Auckland and her love of plants and nature is from tramping the Waitākere Ranges most weekends and coming from a family that enjoyed gardening. The Botanic Garden world started for Maree in Wellington working for Lower Hutt City Council gardens and transitioning to Percy's Scenic Reserve maintaining ex situ alpine collections, working with the Ōtari – Wilton's Bush Manager on native collections.

Maree's horticultural career has taken her around the North Island from Wellington to Auckland over the last 28 years. The first job for Maree was working for Noelyn

Parr and Malcom Woolmore at Lyndale Nursery in West Auckland. She then transitioned to Amenity Horticulture in Wellington and to tree transplanting in Auckland for the Queen Street upgrade with The Specimen Tree Company. More recently, Maree has done landscaping, owned a plant store and helped iwi work with conservation plans for plant conservation.

Maree is looking forward to creating an open space where people can visit and appreciate Platt Arboretum, one that educates public on the Gondwana tree collection and one that connects community to the environment.

When asked what her favourite plant is, Maree says that's a hard question as plants change depending on where she lives in New Zealand. A few special that connect Maree to places she has lived are *Dracophyllum traversii*, mountain neinei at Percys Scenic Reserve, Wellington; *Lobelia aberdarica* – giant lobelia introduced to Maree by Tony Barnes in Taranaki and many in Pukeiti; *Scadoxus multiflorus* subsp. *katherinae* – African blood lily, Maree discovered mass planted in Jury Gardens in woodland beds in Taranaki and *Pennantia baylisiana* – Three Kings kaikomako – Maree was provided seedlings by local growers in New Plymouth after it being first propagated commercially by Duncan and Davies. Maree has a connection through this plant to the Platt Arboretum. It was found seeding by Graham Platt when collecting plants in Taranaki.

Barbara Wheeler

Welcome to Yacek Andreasik – Team Leader, Nursery/Winter Gardens



In early July, we welcomed Yacek Andreasik to the Auckland Domain as the new Team Leader for the Nursery and Winter Gardens team.

Originally from Kraków, one of Poland's oldest and most historic cities, Yacek spent most of his life in the country's southeast. Twelve years ago, he came to New Zealand for a holiday, fell in love with the country, and met his partner. That trip turned into a new life.

Yacek's passion for plants began early.

"I was only ten years old when I started gardening in my parents' backyard. It began with a small 4-square-metre plot but soon grew and by the time I was 15, I took over the entire garden." His deep curiosity about plants, how they grow, their specific needs, and their uniqueness, has only strengthened with time.

In Poland, Yacek worked in landscape gardens and historic garden revitalisation projects, bringing a rich blend of formal and restorative horticultural experience to the Domain. For the past 12 years Yacek has worked for Highlands Retirement Village, starting as a gardener and progressing to Head Gardener.

Yacek has long admired the Auckland Domain, describing it as "one of the most attractive places in the city," especially because of its heritage and plant diversity. "I see it as a place where I can continue to develop myself and help the Winter Gardens become the best and most admired garden in New Zealand."

While he does not claim a single favourite plant, he holds a special place for *Curculigo capitulata*. "My grandmother had a lounge specifically for welcoming guests, and a *Curculigo* was placed right in the centre of the room. We were not allowed in there often, so the plant felt mysterious and special. I love plants like that, unusual and full of character."

We are thrilled to have Yacek on board and look forward to the expertise, energy, and creativity he will bring to the Winter Gardens.

Jonathan Corvisy

Site Manager – Domain Winter Gardens

Paula Lollback retirement

After a career spanning almost 25 years, Paula Lollback retired from the Auckland Botanic Gardens in March, 2025.

Raised in the South Waikato, in the 1970s Paula attended Epsom Girls Grammar where she studied Latin, as part of her boarding bursary, along with biology, maths, French and English. Her initial ambition was to become a physiotherapist but, having seen the treatment for an accident victim during a hospital visit, an aversion to blood quickly made her reconsider career options. Instead, she enrolled at the Auckland Technical Institute (now AUT), completing a Senior Business Course and taking out the annual bookkeeping prize. An accountant in her home town recommended an accounting degree but, after a “tedious” 12-month stint at an accountancy firm, she shelved that idea too. Moving to an international trading company, she found her niche, going on to enjoy secretarial/PA roles across a wide range of industries, including six months in a voluntary role in Singapore.

It was while working for the Quarry Manager at Winstone Aggregates, Mt Wellington, that she came across a job advertisement for a Collection Curator of Roses at the Auckland Botanic Gardens. With gardening in her blood – her parents were keen, creative and skilled gardeners (her mother’s maiden name was “Flower”!) – she decided nothing ventured, nothing gained.

At the interview, she was brave enough to say she preferred mixed plantings to

monocultures – privately thinking that the rows and rows of roses were rather boring! She landed the job.

This was a time of transition for roses at the Auckland Botanic Gardens with manager Jack Hobbs deciding to “turn off the life support” and stop using ecocidal sprays designed to kill all “pests” and fungi. During her first summer, she worked with a team to assess which roses could stand on their own two feet in a functioning garden ecosystem, ultimately removing over half of the existing roses.

The move sparked controversy, with public backlash from traditionalists, but also garnered strong support from those who saw the potential for change. Over the following years, a transformation of the Rose Garden took shape under Paula's curatorial skill and style. The Historic Rose Garden was introduced in 2001, alongside the New Zealand Rose Garden. The Reflective Rose Garden followed in 2003, and by 2005 the Rose Gallery (as it is now known) was established. Throughout, Paula engaged with the community and rose societies, explaining the vision and fostering understanding.

In 2003, Paula faced a particularly intense year – her father passed away in May and then her mother suffered a serious stroke in August, just weeks after Paula returned from a month in the United Kingdom as recipient of the Friends’ Buchanan Award. In 2005, she was further challenged with a stage 3 cancer diagnosis. Despite the difficulties, she continued to focus on her work, finding strength in the support of

her colleagues, volunteers and members of the local community. She formed deep and lasting connections with regular visitors and volunteers.

One of Paula's favourite initiatives was taking roses to Auckland Hospital at Christmas time, brightening the days of oncology patients and staff alike. She cherished hearing stories, like the woman who collected the rose petals for her son's wedding. These interactions reinforced the meaningful role gardens play in people's lives. There is no doubt that regular visitors to the Rose Garden found something special in their conversations with Paula.

A lover of cottage gardens, Paula says if you gave her a thatched cottage in England she would be straight on the next

plane. She still has a deep appreciation for New Zealand's native flora but prefers enjoying it on bush walks rather than in her own small garden.

Asked to name a favourite rose, she says Abraham Darby™ ('Auscot'), a David Austin cultivar with a beautiful fragrance. She adds, however, that her favourite flower is actually *Lathyrus odoratus*, the sweet pea. As she heads to the sunlit and open lands of retirement, Paula looks forward to tending her own garden, a space that has patiently waited for her attention. Her legacy at the Auckland Botanic Gardens will endure, not just in the transformed landscapes but in the lives she has touched along the way.

Greg Meylan, Visitor Services Project
Coordinator

Fred Graham

The recent passing of noted artist Fred Graham CNZM (1 September 1928 – 9 May 2025) was a sad day for all who knew and loved this remarkable man. Widely regarded as one of the leading pioneers of the contemporary Māori art movement, his numerous works remains as a legacy of his prodigious talent. These of course include Manu Torino that welcomes visitors as they approach our visitor centre Huakaiwaka, as well as the evocative Web at the entrance to the Harakeke Collection. Both works were constructed by his great friend and collaborator Rex Erikson.

I first met Fred when I visited his home in 2004 to ask him to create the artwork that became Manu Torino. Any anxiety I may have felt about meeting the great man was quickly dispelled by his warmth and good humour. It also helped that I knew his wife Norma from many years of playing tennis together, and subsequently we travelled with them both to watch tennis at the Australian Open, Davis Cup and the summer tournaments at Stanley Street courts. Fred was always great company, consistently positive and his quick wit and colourful stories kept us all entertained.

Fred was the Tainui representative on our Master Planning project in 2009, and he was a strong advocate for the traditional Māori garden. He was delighted to hear this project has been resurrected and is now being planned for the land recently acquired from the Nathan family.

When I visited Fred a few days before he passed away he was frail but very alert and still cracking the same old jokes I had heard many times before but still found hilarious. He was determined to make it to my farewell function but when that was not possible his son Brett attended in his place for which I am very grateful.

Fred influenced many notable artists during his lengthy time teaching art at

secondary schools. Sally Tagg was one of his students making her wonderful artwork that was gifted to me at my farewell even more meaningful.

Although Fred never sought accolades his contribution to art was recognised with many awards including an Icon Award from the Arts Foundation of New Zealand in 2018 that is limited to 20 living artists. In December 2024 he was appointed a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to Māori art. When he was asked if he would accept a knighthood he declined, such is his humility.

Farewell Fred, and thank you for enriching my life and those of all who knew and loved you.

Jack Hobbs

Fred Graham and engineer Rex Erikson with Manu Torino when just completed. Photo: Jack Hobbs



A unique experience

International Internship at the Auckland Botanic Gardens

My name is Guido Theuns, I'm 20 years old and I live in the Netherlands, near 's-Hertogenbosch. I study Environmental Design and Management (*Management van de Leefomgeving*) at HAS University of Applied Sciences in 's-Hertogenbosch. This program focuses on the development and design of the living environment and offers three specialisations. I chose landscape design because I love the idea of creating designs that can make a real difference in rural and urban outdoor spaces. Many of the projects I work on in the Netherlands focus on sustainable and circular (recycling) use of materials and supporting strong ecological systems. That combination of creativity, technical thinking, and nature really speaks to me, and I see it as a way to contribute to a more sustainable future.

Why New Zealand and Auckland Botanic Gardens?

In the third year of our studies, we are required to complete part of our internship abroad. Many of my fellow students choose destinations close to home, like Belgium or Germany – convenient, as they can go home in the weekends. But I love to travel and had already explored much of Europe. I wanted to go further, and New Zealand was just about the furthest I could go. After some research and planning, I got in touch with the Auckland Botanic Gardens. They didn't have a standard internship position available, so I worked together with Curator Barbara Wheeler to shape one. The internship she

proposed offered a great mix of hands-on experience, garden design, and of course, working with plants in a completely different climate. The opportunity to learn in such a unique setting made the decision to go to New Zealand quite easy.

My Internship at the Auckland Botanic Gardens

I divided my internship into two main parts. First, I focused on gaining practical experience in garden construction and maintenance. Four days a week, I worked closely with the Botanic Gardens field team. This team consists of incredibly dedicated, enthusiastic, and friendly people who welcomed me warmly. Thanks to their support and guidance, I was able to make the most of my time here.

The work was very diverse: from planting new borders and pruning (to me) exotic trees, to working in the nursery and maintaining boardwalks and paths. The wide variety of gardens and plant collections at the Auckland Botanic Gardens offered a lot of learning opportunities. What stood out to me most was the high level of commitment and passion for the job throughout the entire team. That made me feel comfortable right away and gave me the space to grow. Something else I noticed during my internship was the difference in work culture between the Netherlands and New Zealand. In New Zealand, things are done at a more relaxed pace, with more attention to work-life balance and communication. I found this very pleasant. In the Netherlands, there's often

(too) much pressure to perform – that can be motivating, but also exhausting at times. The New Zealand approach felt healthier to me.

In addition to the practical work, I also worked on a concept design for the Rock Garden – Americas section. I took on this project because I wanted to combine my own design knowledge with the new insights I gained in New Zealand. During the design process, I collaborated with colleagues who had experience with the garden. My final concept combined my own design style with planting and technical knowledge I learned here.

New Zealand as an Experience

Alongside my internship, I also had the chance to explore New Zealand – first with my father, and later with colleagues. I was lucky enough to experience many adventures in both the North and South Islands. From long hikes through Abel Tasman Park, and witnessing the beauty of Milford Sound and Fox Glacier, to exploring Auckland and the nearby islands – it was unforgettable.

What an incredibly beautiful and diverse country! The range of landscapes, climates, and vegetation is impressive. This is truly a unique place on Earth, both in terms of nature and culture – something New Zealanders can be rightfully proud of.

What also stood out to me was how open and welcoming people are here. Compared to the Netherlands, people in New Zealand are quicker to strike up a conversation or offer help. I really appreciated that openness and kindness. Another thing I noticed is how seriously

New Zealand takes the preservation of its own culture, especially Māori heritage. The way traditional values and practices are integrated into daily life is inspiring – and important, especially for an island nation.

On the other hand, I also noticed differences when it comes to sustainability. In my view, the Netherlands is ahead in terms of circular, ecological, and climate-conscious living. That mindset is not yet as widespread in New Zealand, although there is certainly growing awareness. I believe there's great potential for development in this area. Investing in sustainable and circular design is something I'm passionate about, and I see many opportunities for New Zealand to benefit from this — both ecologically and economically. In that sense, Auckland Botanic Gardens stands out as a leader within New Zealand. The innovative and future-focused work being done here can serve as a valuable source of inspiration for positive change across the country.

A Word of Thanks

My time in New Zealand is an experience I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I've not only gained a lot of professional knowledge, but I've also grown personally in many ways. I would especially like to thank my internship supervisor, Barbara Wheeler, for her genuine involvement and infectious enthusiasm.

And finally, a big word of appreciation to the entire Auckland Botanic Gardens team. Your helpfulness, warmth and sincere interest made me feel right at home from the start.

Guido Theuns

Botanical Art Worldwide, 2025

The Auckland section of the thirty-country Botanical Art Worldwide exhibition closed on Sunday, 29 June and the forty works for the touring exhibition were packed ready for transport to the Wellington Botanic Gardens where they will be displayed in the Tree House Gallery from 1 August to 30 September then on to the Ashburton Art Gallery from 17 October to 7 December.

Visitor numbers have been high and the response by visitors to the works positive. Fourteen works have been sold so far, and card and print sales, while not as high as in the past, have been good.

The exhibition opened to the public on Saturday, 29 March with the formal opening on Saturday evening attended by around 70 artists with family and friends, Friends members, Gardens staff, sponsors and others from the art world. Attendees were welcomed by Friends President, Viv Canham, Gardens Manager, Jack Hobbs, Lesley Alexander on behalf of the Steering Committee, Sandra Morris on behalf of BASNZ and Sue Wickison on behalf of the artists.

On 18 May, Worldwide Day of Botanical Art, a number of our exhibiting artists provided a series of workshops and demonstrations. Over 30 attended the interesting presentation "Te Korowai o Papatuanuku – the Cloak of the Earth Mother" by Dr Nick Roskrige, who discussed the use made by Māori, and

later by European colonists, of the plants indigenous to New Zealand. Successful workshops were held on other weekends during the exhibition.

A video presentation of the works from all participating countries was made available by the American Society of Botanical Artists and screened in the Visitor Centre.

The chance to vote for the "People's Choice" award was popular with over 1600 votes cast. The highest vote went to Jennifer Duval-Smith for her *Red Cabbage* (see the front cover of this newsletter) with Amanda Ffion Bell's *Lemons*, Sue Wickison's *Crocus* and Erin Forsyth's *Blue Calabash* coming close behind. Jennifer receives the \$250.00 voucher provided by Gordon Harris Art Supplies.

The Steering Committee of Lesley Alexander, Sandra Morris, Megan Lockwood and Liz Powell was delighted with the number and quality of works submitted for selection and the positive response of all those who came to enjoy the exhibition. We thank the jury of Sri Benham, Ross Ferguson and Barbara Wheeler who made the final selection for display. Thanks too, to the Visitor Centre staff who dealt with sales and the myriad questions asked by visitors, to funders, Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens and the Botanical Art Society of New Zealand (BASNZ) and to Gordon Harris Art Supplies and John Leech Framers for their support.

Liz Powell

Growing Friends

It is the time of the year to tweak your garden a little and to replant for better effect. Nothing is more stultifying (and futile) than preserving a garden in stasis for years on end. *Phormium tenax* can be added into gaps in beds for an unapologetic flower garden. Striking shapes replace fading flowers for a real garden. A wet and muddy lawn patch can be transformed into a rewilded oasis by replacing it with low growing *Coprosma brevifolia*, hebe (*Veronica*) 'Wiri Splash' and (you guessed it) *Phormium tenax* along with other natives.

The Growing Friends will participate in the Auckland Tree Crops Sale in September. The New Zealand Tree Crops Association is a voluntary organisation promoting interest in useful trees, such as those producing fruit, nuts, timber, fuel, wood, stock fodder, bee forage and other productive crops. However, there will be a wide variety of stalls that includes the sales of trees, edible plants, produce, cuttings,

perennials and natives. Growing Friends will have a selection of plants. Angela and Laurence from the Gardens provide the Growing Friends with additional plants and help in setting up our stall.

Plant fairs are gaining popularity overseas where internet sales have led to a decline in garden centres. The younger generation especially enjoys an event with a large selection of plants.

Please, keep in your diary:

Auckland Tree Crops Sale
Saturday 27 September
9.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

(Rain date - Saturday 4 October, 9.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.)

Venue:
Courtyards,
Auckland Botanic Gardens
102 Hill Road, The Gardens, Manurewa

Hiltrud Gruger

Membership subscription

Membership subscriptions for the Friends 2025/6 financial year are now due. A renewal form is included with this Newsletter. Members who joined within the last two months will have their subscription carried over into the new financial year which begins 1 July 2025.

Subscriptions can be paid either by eftpos or cash at the Visitor Centre or by direct deposit ASB 123011 0757619 00. Please put your name on the bank transfer and indicate that this is a membership renewal.

Friends spring bus trip

We'll visit four gardens, not too far away:

- Firstly, in the cool of the morning, we call at Gellert's Nurseries and go inside the extensive glasshouses.
- Next, Puriri Lane @ Addenbrooke, where we'll wander through four acres of many varied plantings at the beautiful home of Jane and Graeme Thomas.
- We travel onto Joy Plants where we will have our picnic lunch and see the Hatch's own superb garden. We can buy plants at all these venues.
- Lastly, we visit Jack Hobbs' private garden where he will undoubtedly entertain us as he shows us his garden.

Friends are welcome to bring friends.

Any queries, ring Barbara Harvey
027 2865671 or 09 2638801

When:	Saturday 8 November Leaving at 8.30 a.m. sharp
Where:	Meet outside the Visitor Centre, Auckland Botanic Gardens
Cost:	\$45pp Includes entry fees and bus
Return:	Auckland Botanic gardens approx. 4.30 p.m.
Bring:	Lunch, drinks, walking shoes, raincoat and money or cards to buy plants
Book by:	27 October
Payment:	Pay online to account 12-3011-0757619-000 by 27 October. Give name and state "Bus Trip" OR pay at the Visitor Centre.

Tangled roots: how grasses shaped us

There can be no other family of plants that has shaped humanity more than the grasses. Even their name speaks to this deep connection — "grass" comes from Indo-European roots meaning to grow, a fundamental definition of life itself.

Today, grasses cover a quarter of the Earth's land surface. But for around 60 million years, they were marginal players

in a world ruled by forests. Grasses clung to disturbed edges — riverbeds, escarpments, landslips, treefalls — places of disruption and opportunity.

That changed about 10 million years ago as the planet became cooler and drier. The change was driven by a combination of factors: the uplift of the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau, shifts in ocean

circulation, and increased carbon burial in marine sediments. As forests retreated, grasses surged into the expanding open spaces, transforming ecosystems and reshaping life's evolutionary path.

Where once there was canopy, there came open sky. And with it, new ways of life.

The animals of the forest adapted or disappeared. Legs lengthened. Teeth hardened. Herds began to gather on the open plains, feeding on the grass — and becoming food in turn.

Our ancestors were there, too: small forest apes learning to navigate a new world alongside the ancestors of zebras, gazelles, lions and buffaloes. Some apes stayed in the shrinking forests, becoming chimpanzees and gorillas. But others stepped out into the light — and became us.

For around 240,000 generations, our ancestors lived in and around grasslands — hunting, scavenging, sheltering — but without eating the grasses themselves. It wasn't until the last 400 generations that we learned to unlock the energy held in grass seeds.

Grain farming — alongside the control of fire — is one of the most transformative acts in human history. Barley, wheat, rice, maize, and sugarcane began to be planted as human populations swelled at the end of the last ice age.

By 3000 BCE, the first grain-based empires had taken shape. Writing and mathematics

emerged from the need to track grain stored in city temples. Surplus stores gave rise to new gods, new hierarchies — and the beginnings of written history.

The *Tangled Roots* exhibition at Auckland Botanic Gardens explores this deep entanglement — from the evolutionary surge of grasslands to the rise of grain-fed cities. It's a story of co-dependence, of chance and change, and of how a humble family of wind-pollinated plants came to shape the fate of our species.

Visitors to Huakaiwaka Visitor Centre will be able to trace the spread of grasslands and the animals that adapted to them, and discover how grains like wheat, rice, and maize reshaped our diets, beliefs, and societies. From ancient harvest offerings to lush modern lawns, from buffalo to barley, the exhibition *Tangled Roots* reveals how a family of plants quietly rewrote the story of life on Earth — including our own.

Out in the Gardens visitors can walk a labyrinth made of living grasses, encounter a giant grass kiwi and take a special grass trail. There will also be a truly memorable encounter with performers wearing suits of living grass, designed by United Kingdom artist Ashley Peavor, whose involvement is generously supported by the Friends of the Botanic Gardens.

Tangled Roots opens in mid-November.

Greg Meylan
Visitor Services Project Coordinator

Prickly wonders at the Winter Gardens

For several years, I felt something was missing in Auckland's public gardens: an engaging cacti display. Aside from a few private collections and isolated gardens displaying them, there was nothing substantial or accessible for the public to enjoy. At the Winter Gardens we used to display a small cacti display each August, but it was easy to miss. So, we discussed whether we could create something more permanent, something that celebrates these fascinating plants.

This display is about more than just showcasing cacti. It tells a story, helping people understand what defines a desert, exploring different desert types, and showing how plants adapt to extreme conditions. Initially, I considered grouping plants by region, but limited species made that difficult. After some discussion, I reorganised the concept around desert types, subtropical, coastal, cold, and dry, which turned out to be more practical and engaging.

Planning the layout took time. I wanted people to move through the display, not just look at it. Each section has a different surface - sand, gravel, or rock, to reflect its desert type, and I used height, shapes, and colour to create visual interest. The plants came from our existing collection, made up of donations, and acquisitions over the years. Some have been at the Domain Nursery for decades. Sourcing

cold-desert plants was challenging, and that part remains a work in progress.

Handling large, spiny specimens is tricky and requires careful teamwork.

All plants are in pots, that we have plunged into a sand bed to make the display look natural.

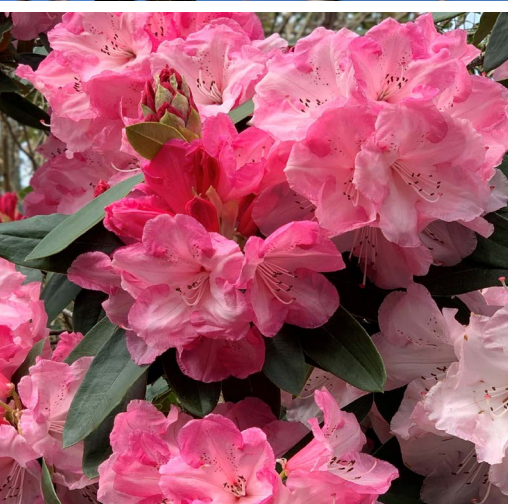
Watering is carefully managed, more frequent in summer, less in winter depending on the species.

Although the display is permanent, it will evolve. I monitor it weekly in winter, more often in summer, and rotate in flowering specimens from the nursery when they are at their best. It has been rewarding to see people stop, ask questions, and show real curiosity. That's exactly what I hoped for.

If you're considering your own cactus display, my advice is simple: plan carefully, ensure excellent drainage, especially outdoors, and be flexible. And above all, safety first.

The cacti display is housed in the Winter Gardens Temperate House.

Aaron Folwell
Nursery Technician –
Domain Winter Gardens





Stachyurus praecox
photo by Barbara Wheeler



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