

Leaflet

Bason Botanic Gardens
Trust Newsletter

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY
H&A
DESIGN AND PRINT

Spring/Summer 2011-2012

Choisya

Wendy McGhie

Pictured above is a fine leaved Choisya hybrid, which can be found in the Friendship Garden. This plant Choisya 'Aztec Pearl' gives a good display, having slightly larger flowers than the common variety Choisya ternata. This latter plant is also found in the same garden, and is commonly known as Mexican orange blossom

As that name suggests, Choisya are from Mexico. They are from the same family as citrus, and when the leaves are crushed they give off an aromatic smell not unlike citrus. Choisya grow well in most parts of Wanganui, even closer to the coast. Flowering for a long period throughout the year from spring through summer and into autumn, they like a well drained position, in sun or semi-shade. They trim well, and can be used as a hedge.

Cork oaks

Marc Higgle

Next time you head down the hill from the Homestead Garden, take a stroll through the stand of trees on the inside of the hairpin bend. Gaze up through the canopy and marvel at the haphazard branches twisting their way into the sky and, in particular, have a close look at the bark on the trunks. Touch it. The soft, fissured and sculptural texture you feel is precisely what you pull out of a wine bottle, and what is often seen on kitchen or bathroom floors: cork.

These beauties are *Quercus suber*, or cork oaks, and they hail from southwest Europe and North Africa. In their natural habitat, the corky bark acts as a defense mechanism against pests, pathogens and also fire. The cork oaks in the Bason Botanic Gardens are the progeny of a majestic old tree in Avondale, Auckland.

About six years ago I was traveling through the south of France where I was thrilled to see many cork oaks on the roadside both planted and natural. Big plantations are managed, with the lower section of bark being

stripped from around the whole trunk every five to ten years. Harvesting is a precise art, ensuring that none of the thin cambium layer beneath the bark is damaged, so that the tree

PTO

Below: Marc Higgle pruning one of the cork oaks



(From previous page)

will stay healthy and grow a new layer of cork. All cork oaks in French National Parks are protected from cork harvesting but unfortunately careless cork poachers are wreaking havoc on these ancient forests of virgin cork oak. In that respect I fully support screw top wine bottles!

Back home in New Zealand we have a small plantation on our farm which apart from being visually enchanting and a future seed source, I dream of harvesting one day for some home grown cork! In Wellington I had the privilege of climbing and working in a huge old heritage cork oak. To protect the bark I took off my boots and climbed bare foot and was as gentle as possible while removing dead branches. It was an experience I will never forget.

While the trees in the Bason have a way to grow before they are perhaps as venerable as their parents, they are still a joy to have and to be able to visit for us all. The trees themselves don't need pruning but Dad (Clive) and I gave them a tickle with our saws to make them more inviting and enticing for you to wander in and succumb to your own cork experience.

Below: One of the cork oaks, after being pruned



Chairman's Annual Report (abridged)

Sheryl Gedye

As always the Trust is committed to keeping Stanley Bason's vision in mind as we plan for posterity. 2011 is actually well into the 100 years that he predicted it would take for the Botanic gardens to be fully established. Progress is well underway. Currently this is largely thanks to the combined efforts of WDC officers, the Community Projects Team under the guidance of Mike Tyson, and the contractors Fulton Hogan.

The increasing numbers of visitors puts pressure on the facilities. This keeps us aware of the need to use all the space that is available in the Gardens by spreading activities around. As a consequence, another barbeque has been built in the top flat this year, to encourage better utilization of this area. Renovations to the conservatory have also been made, and the deteriorating punga walls have been replaced with a cladding of bamboo and fresh punga. The ongoing issues of leakage in the Scoular room are being addressed by WDC through waterproofing.

The Board constantly keeps in mind Stanley's concern for the botanical aspects of the Gardens, ensuring that these are developed as a home for rare, beautiful, and interesting plants. It is through this commitment that a place of unique value for the future people of Wanganui can be created. New plantings on the Rhododendron Walk have been enhanced with improvements to the paths, making for a smoother surface and more attractive walkway. Trust members have contributed to further plantings on Millennium Hill, and the maintenance of the attractive succulent and Homestead Garden. There are plans to redevelop the entranceway to the Homestead garden to make the garden more inviting, and encourage more visitors into that area.

BOOKINGS: Direct all Botanic Gardens venue/BBQ bookings to Pat Mitchell, WDC, phone 349 0001.

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

Join the 'last Tuesday'
Garden Volunteers morning.
A chance to learn more and share
with a small friendly group.

**Over 200 people visit our website
daily.**



CONTACTS

Secretary:

Phil Thomsen, c/- PO Box 778,
Wanganui. Ph. 347 1421
PRD@xtra.co.nz

Treasurer / Membership

Terry Dowdeswell c/- PO Box 778,
Wanganui. Ph. 3421733
terry@delphinium.co.nz

Bason Homestead: Custodian
552 Rapanui Road, RD4, Wanganui,

**Volunteers Group Co-ordinator;
Patron,** Vonnie Cave, ph 345 8326

Lakeside Project

Phil Thomsen

As this Newsletter goes to print, the Lakeside Project is nearing completion, only awaiting regrassing to be finished. The project took place over the winter months, which caused numerous problems. WDC Senior Parks Officer Wendy McGhie said that the Picnic Flat was the soggiest that she had ever seen it. In addition, the Bason had the unheard-of event of snow lying on the ground for three days. These problems caused several delays, and generally made the work difficult.

Excavation for the terraces was carried out by Bullocks Ltd, who constructed a causeway of bark peelings across the Picnic Flat to minimize damage to the lawn. The ground approaching the Lake has been excavated with a shallower gradient created to allow an easier transition to the Lake, and better access to it.

The design was done by the Isthmus Landscape Architects of Wellington, who had also designed the new walkway by the weir (featured in the Winter Newsletter). Sarah Bishop and Nathan Young (formally of Wanganui) carried out the design work for Isthmus. Stuart McIntosh, consulting engineer for BPL Group, was the project manager. Supervision on the spot was carried out by Phil Houghton, manager of Houghton and Gemini Pepper, who were the main contractors.

The most striking feature of the latest stages is the Alexander Terraces. The terraces close to the new raised walkway over the Lake are constructed of treated pine which has been stained. These walls are retained by galvanized brackets which are anchored by concrete.

The larger terraces close to the barbeque are formed of brick, the work being completed by Wanganui Brick and Plaster. The bricks are only a façade; there is a reinforced concrete wall behind them. The bricks are old ones, to ensure a match with other features at the Gardens. Drainage under the terraces was installed by Palmers Plumbing.

Below: The project team. From left to right, Phil Houghton (Houghton and Gemini Pepper); Wendy McGhie (Wanganui District Council); Nathan Young (Isthmus Landscape Architects); Stuart Mackintosh (BPL Group—consulting engineer and Project Manager).



On top of these walls are pre-cast concrete cappings, which were constructed by Emmetts Civil Construction and brought on site. Stuart McIntosh of BPL spoke very highly of the accuracy in creating the curves of the cappings, the calculations for which were done by Phil Houghton. Stuart commented that there was only one chance to get the cappings right! Stuart also commended highly the commitment shown by Wendy McGhie to ensure the result that best integrated with the overall property and the needs of the end users.

Shellrock paths now link the bottom of the Millennium Steps with the toilet block and the main internal road. The main car park adjacent to this has been recreated, slightly closer to the Lake. Another shellrock path now connects this area with the Alexander Terraces. These paths, of generous width, now make the goal of having an all-weather pedestrian track connecting all the main features of the Gardens a step closer to completion.

Wanganui is indebted to the generosity of the bequest of Christian and Belle Alexander in making this magnificent facility possible.

Below: The new Alexander Steps, making an elegant entry to the Lakeside.



Above: The new Alexander Terraces, still to be grassed. The barbeque that is closest to the Lake can be seen in the background. The land that the Terraces sit on has been excavated to improve the gradient to the Lake

Dogs at the Bason

Clive Higgin

Back in August, we were in Wellington. Nicki, Pablo (our 5kg dachshund) and I went for a walk in the Wellington Botanic Gardens, where dogs are welcome, so long as they're on a lead and so long as you do what all responsible dog-owners do in picking up any dog poo.

In October, the three of us were in Auckland and we went to the Auckland Botanic Gardens where, as it turned out, our four-footed friend was welcome too.

So it set me to thinking: why on earth are dogs not welcome in some of Wanganui's best parks?

Unfortunately for the dogs and the good owners, I think the reason is that some dog-owners here have not been sufficiently responsible in the past. Okay, we're a provincial district, but surely with a little education, dog-owners could lift their game a bit and behave more like our metropolitan brothers, whose dogs are not threatening to others and waste is never left to offend.

If there were signage spelling out to dog-walkers the responsible approach, at the Bason and at Virginia Lake, I'm sure these facilities would be enjoyed by a larger number of our community, as in bigger cities, in New Zealand and overseas.

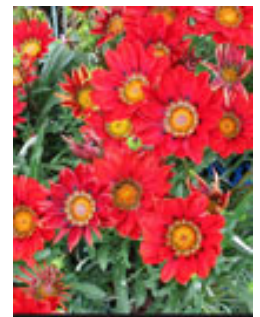
Some of the best red.

Sheryl Gedye

The hot garden is where you'll find the brightest stars in the Homestead garden. Each season brings new delights, but my favourite perennials would be the red daylilies, flowering now, and then followed by the red cannas, Echinacea 'tomato soup', and then Gazania 'Takatu red'. All excellent fillers, along with the usual annuals of impatiens, geraniums, and begonias. A very bright picture that will only get better as Summer approaches.



Left: Echinacea
"Tomato Soup"



Right: Gazania
"Takatu Red"

Perhaps the dogs are not welcome because of the bird life, although how dogs on a leash could affect the birds, I don't know. Or maybe, should the birds be banned from the Virginia and Bason lakes, because of their smelly messes all over the place? If the overpopulation of birds was controlled, it certainly would help water quality and lessen the algal bloom problems.

To sum up, let's ask Council to give it a trial this summer. What do you think? Please get in touch with a committee member to share your view.

Below: A member of the family omitted from one of "family-friendly" Wanganui's parks.



Below: The new path being excavated along the peninsula into the Lake.

Photo: Stuart Macintosh



Below: The completed shellrock path, featuring seating from which to admire the Lake and wildlife.

