



Bason botanic gardens trust

spring 2020 newsletter

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FROM THE CHAIR

We finished last summer under the shadow of Covid 19 and, during various stages of lockdown, the Bason Botanic Gardens provided a sanctuary for those wanting some quiet reflection and open air. With summer approaching again we can only hope that visitors will be able to enjoy a freer and happier time together with family and friends.

As usual, the gardens have been maintained well over winter and early spring, and now that plants are bursting into life there is much to see. Thanks again to Megan and her Fulton Hogan team, our volunteers and to Wendy Bainbridge, our Parks and Reserves officer. All of you do a great job.

We are awaiting quotes for the construction of a pathway through the trees behind the lake, which will complete a circular walkway around it. Watch out for construction beginning perhaps this summer, although the work will be designed to cause minimum disruption.

There is plenty of interest to read in this issue, so I'll keep this introduction short.

Please, visit the gardens and have a happy start to summer!

Terry Dowdeswell
Chair
Bason Botanic
Gardens Trust



NICOLE SMITH

Many visitors to the Bason will have met Nicole Smith, usually in the Homestead Garden or Conservatory area. She mainly works alongside Megan and Veronica. Comments are often made about her willingness to help, and depth of knowledge on plant-related matters.

Nicole is an employee of Fulton Hogan, which is contracted to maintain the Gardens for the Whanganui District Council. She currently lives at Mangamahu, and commutes each day; however, she is planning to eventually move to a property that her and her partner own in Kaitoke. Currently they are clearing it of gorse and planting manuka and other trees.

Originally from Henderson, Nicole has grown plants all her life. She was given her first orchid plant (an Australian *Dendrobium kingianum*) by her Grandfather when she was 10 years old and has grown them ever since. She attended orchid shows and dealt with specialist growers.

Before coming to Whanganui, Nicole lived in Kaukapakapa, north of Auckland. She worked in a Cymbidium orchid-growing operation owned by Bruce and Caroline Cowan. Nicole was involved with all aspects of the business, from potting

and maintaining the plants to harvesting, packing and despatching the flowers for export.

As a result, it is no surprise that Nicole's specialist role at the Gardens is looking after the orchid collection. She is pleased to have a new electronic monitoring system installed in the Winston and Agnes Larsen Orchid House.

The biggest frustration is ongoing theft. Visitors are reminded that if they see theft or vandalism, they should note the number plate of the vehicle and ring the Police. However, replacement plants are purchased by WDC, and there have been generous donations over the years, including by Ken Elms (Tudor Orchids) and the estate of the late Margaret Spittal. Older plants can also sometimes be divided.

Nicole has also been photographing and developing a database of the orchid collection. This indicates the plants that fail to flower, and may need further attention.

Nicole, along with the other gardeners, is usually too busy to spend much time talking; however is happy to answer questions or explain the gardens to visiting groups.

Phil Thomsen



Newsletters are also displayed on our website at <http://www.basonbotanicgardens.org.nz/>
You can find us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/basonbotanicgardens/>
I encourage you to use this forum. Your comments are welcome.

EDIBLE INSPIRATION HEL LOADER

PLEASE DON'T EAT THE PLANTS AT THE BBG, MOST ARE NOT EDIBLE AND SOME CAN BE TOXIC!

Labour weekend has just gone and many of us were busy sorting out tomatoes, planting potatoes or digging over our vegetable gardens ready for summer crops. While we don't have a vegetable garden at the Bason, we have a surprising number of edible or ornamental forms of edible plants.

While the herb beds in the Homestead Garden are the obvious place to look for edible plants, there are a number spread out elsewhere in the BBG. In the Mediterranean inspired gardens you will find citrus and olives, along with hazels and walnuts. Elsewhere there are loquat trees (*Eriobotrya japonica*), cardoons (*Cynara cardunculus*) and the aptly named prickly pear (*Opuntia ficus-indica*).

There is a wider group of plants and trees that are grown for their beauty rather than the ability to eat them, these include false date palms (*Phoenix canariensis*), flowering cherries and crab apples, along with ornamental onions.

Others don't look edible at all but their close relatives are, such as the spiky Puya which is in the same family as the pineapple - not to be confused with the pineapple lily (*Eucomis*) which are bulbs that have flowers that look a bit like a pineapple.

Then there are plants that you assume are grown just for their flowers but have been used for food in the past, these include daylilies (*Hemerocallis fulva*) which have edible flowers, stalks and tubers. Dahlia (*Dahlia pinnata*) have edible tubers like their close relative Jerusalem artichokes (*Helianthus tuberosus*) but I wouldn't recommend eating modern hybrids.

If you want to go native, then there is an abundance of local bush tucker if you know how to identify and prepare it - at the Botanical Gardens these include:

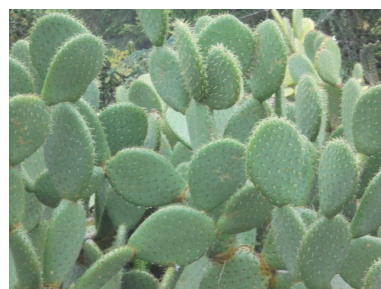
- Tī kōuka (*Cordyline australis*) have tender central leaf shoots that can be eaten raw or cooked – hence it's common name, cabbage tree.

- Young shoots or fiddleheads of ferns such as: hen and chickens (mouku); common shield (pikopiko); gully (pākau); or hound's tongue (kōwaowao), should be steamed or lightly boiled before eating to remove carcinogenic compounds. The roots of bracken fern (rārahu) can also be eaten but are complex to prepare.
- Kawakawa (*Macropiper excelsum*) seeds can be used as a culinary spice and a tea can be made from its leaves.
- Horopito (*Pseudowintera colorata*) adds peppery heat to meat and fish dishes, which means it's often referred to as the native pepper shrub.
- And if the gardeners haven't weeded it out, then puha (*Sonchus oleraceus*) is a good edible green.

The Loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*) forms a spreading tree with glossy leaves the fruit turn yellow when ripe.



Opuntia, commonly called prickly pear, is a genus in the cactus family, Cactaceae. Both the fruit and paddles are edible, but it is quiet a job trimming off all the spines before you can eat them.



Crab apples (*Malus sylvestris*) make lovely small garden trees with pretty flowers followed by clusters of fruit which can stay on the tree through winter. While the apples can be bitter, they make a lovely jelly when cooked and are useful to add to other apples when making cider.



BOOKINGS: Direct all Botanic Gardens venue/BBQ bookings to the Customer Service Desk Whanganui District Council, phone 349 0001.

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Send your name, postal and email address to BBGT Treasurer:
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The impressive leaves of Cardoons (*Cynara cardunculus*) show that it's a close relative of the edible Artichoke. Unlike Artichoke, it's the stems of Cardoons that are used in cooking, not the thistle like flowers.



This ornamental Allium is one of the onion family, if you can't get hold of the ornamental form you can always let chives, spring onions or leeks flower for a similar affect.

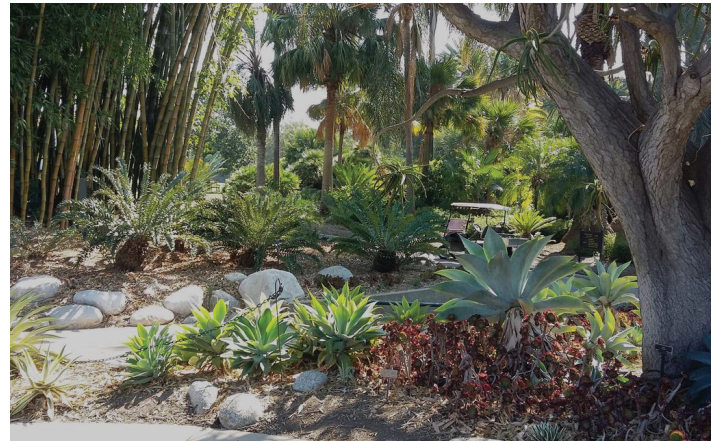


While the Canary Island Date Palm (*Phoenix canariensis*), produces fruit it is inedible and can seed readily as it gets rather large its not always the best palm to grow in domestic gardens, but does make for a grand entrance to the Homestead Garden.



This Puya is a member of same botanical family as Pineapples, both are Bromeliaceae.

We regularly receive newsletters at our Bason Botanic Gardens email address, from Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI).



Established in 1987, BGCI currently links more than 600 botanic gardens and conservation organisations and 60,000 individuals in over 100 countries, working together to secure plant diversity for the well-being of people and the planet. They offer membership to institutions and individuals.

Below is a link to their Newsletter and a teaser for an article by the BGCI Secretary General to whet your appetite.

<https://mailchi.mp/a00da967fc7a/july-2020-cultivate-announcing-the-botanist-x-bgci-9461065?e=8265165e2e>

BGCI has been in contact with various tree planting initiatives, including IUCN's Bonn Challenge Secretariat, the Trillion Trees Campaign (WWF, BirdLife and WCS), the Global Evergreening Alliance, and 1t.org (the World Economic Forum's trillion trees initiative). Given that the botanical community is leading the Global Tree Assessment and we grow over 18,000 tree species in botanic gardens and arboreta, we believe that we have a role to play in helping to ensure that the right tree is planted in the right place and that diverse native species are part of tree planting portfolios.

Surely it is common sense to incorporate biodiversity, botanical data and botanical expertise into both the planning and practice of tree planting? Not necessarily it seems.

To subscribe to the BGCI newsletter simply navigate to the link above, look in the top left-hand corner, click on subscribe and fill the simple form.

The 2020 AGM of the Bason Botanic Garden Trust

will be held in the SeniorNet rooms, Community Arts Centre, 19 Taupo Quay, Wanganui

Access from Moutua Quay, near the back door of Renata's Art & Framing. Follow the green arrows through the back door by the Potters workshop, turn left & up the stairs.

Date Thursday 26th November - Time 7pm

TRAMPING CLUB TT2 WALKERS GROUP EXPLORE THE GARDENS

'I never knew that.' 'I haven't walked this area before.' were two common comments from The WTC's fortnightly Walking Group as they explored the Bason Botanic Gardens with day's leader Beverley Sinclair. After a brief introduction to Stanley and Blanche and the Gardens, they zig-zagged down Millennium Hill past the agapanthus collection and colourful Brugmansias, past the cork trees and South African plantings. They headed for the Mowhanau Stream weir and up the hill. (There always needs to be at least one hill on these morning walks.)

They gazed up at the 'largest pinecone' plantings, then along the Spring walk. A few late daffodils wafted in the breeze under the magnolias. Behind the Boothby Fernhouse, they learnt about Geocaching and were given hints as to where one 'cache' was hidden. Admiring the views (and catching their breath) they talked about bringing grandkids to do the Red Kiwi Orienteering course. They felt the braille dots on the orienteering post as they descended into the Native Walk and across the Anzac Bridge gazing at the Wetlands. No Westmere School children's

labels for the trees, which were installed several years ago, were to be found. (Although the Plantsnap phone app was handy, a few more labels for leaders with failing memories would be helpful!)

They walked through the trees near the Flax Collection and up to the Rotary Lookout. Some admired the carvings while others had a go at Disc (Frisbee) Golf. The bluebells were finished as they clambered through the long grass up the hill, through the Eucalyptus collection to the Native Arboretum and on to the Conifer collection. There was

a short discussion about the definitions of firs, spruces and pines. Completing the Ring Road they took a relaxing browse around the Homestead Garden. Gardener Nicole let us have a look in the tunnel house and showed us her 'plant of the moment', an orchid called *Zygopetalum* orchid (South America).

Morning tea in the Scoullar Room completed the walk although there was the offer of a quick run, down and up, the Millennium Hill Steps if anyone felt they hadn't been challenged enough. It was a good morning's walk, and the work of the gardeners was much appreciated.

October 2020
Beverley Sinclair



Zygopetalum orchid (South America)



The Scoullar Room



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c/- PO Box 778, Wanganui

