



# Bason botanic gardens trust

winter 2019 newsletter

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## FROM THE CHAIR WINTER:

Winters are so beautiful. Aren't they? Cooler weather brings on the brassicas and insists that caterpillars leave them alone. Days, cut short, free up more time for cosy reflection, catching up on inside work, or simple sloth, ignored during summer in favour of more energetic outdoor pursuits.

You now have time to plan the garden. You may even enjoy a night out someplace researching what to do with it. Well, I'd like to help. Lucky Wilbur, who is the Garden Design consultant at Springvale Garden Centre, is the guest speaker following our AGM at 7:00 pm on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> August, at the Davis Lecture Theatre.

Lucky qualified as a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University in 2015 and has up to date, refreshing ideas about garden design for both small and expansive gardens. I met her recently, found her very knowledgeable, engaging and full of life. Just the person to light up your winter's evening. Please, come to our AGM, be entertained and learn something interesting and useful too.



While the botanic gardens are mostly sleeping, progress is being made on planning:

A pathway to complete the around the lake walk, extending from the Japanese Tea House over the hill on the North side of the lake, and to join the existing pathway near the weir to the west, is in the design stage. We are hopeful to complete this by the summer of 2021.

Elise Goodge and Karen Craig are producing and directing another Shakespeare play "The Merchant of Venice" for performances from February 28th to March 1<sup>st</sup> next year. This will be the third "Shakespeare in the Park Whanganui" and the plays are developing quite a following. See <http://www.shakespeareintheparkwhanganui.com/> for more information and updates.

The trust's strategic plan for the next ten years is almost complete. Part of that plan is to record all significant trees, their history and maintenance, on a GPS database. Phil and I were out at the gardens recently



practicing our tech skills for this. Phil kindly posed for a rare picture.

In the botanic gardens, daffodils are pushing up and there are a few brave souls flowering already.

Winter will not last long. Make the most of it.

See you at the AGM!

Terry Dowdeswell  
Chair



## BRUGMANSIAS AT THE BASON

This last summer saw repeated mass flowerings of many, if not all, of the brugmansias at the Bason. These are mostly on Mill Hill but there are a few in the Homestead garden too.



Often called daturas, in fact they're not. Daturas are annuals with erect flowers, while brugmansias are woody shrubs or trees with pendulous flowers.

Both brugmansias and daturas are poisonous, chocka with neurotoxin and hallucinogens. This basically means if you're silly enough to partake, you're lining up for quite an interesting (some survivors have said "horribly terrible") death or brush therewith. A bit different to the good old rhododendron which just kills you outright.

So why are we growing these brugmansias? Well, they are incredibly beautiful – a sight to behold when in full flower. And in the evening, the perfume is spellbinding!

There's a larger range of colours available now too. The

old stand-bys, *B. sanguinea* (often called bugle lily, angel's trumpet or datura) were often planted around homesteads. Their trumpet flowers could be all yellow or, more commonly, a greeny yellow throat moving to a striking red. *B. x candida*, likewise a small sometimes-suckering tree, has large double white flowers.

The new colours are from the recently (1980s) imported *B. suaveolens*. This was pink, called Noel's Blush (after Noel Scotting). Soon several plant breeders here released many gold, apricot and more pink selections. And even several double pinks. These are so ravishingly gorgeous! There is quite a range on Mill Hill – some lovely golds and of course, a double pink (*B. Charlotte*).

All brugmansias are easy to grow. They need a warm sheltered spot. They don't like frost but generally recover well. These South and Central American beauties are easy to propagate by cuttings in spring or summer.

- Clive Higgin

## WHAT TAKES ME OUT TO THE BASON BOTANIC GARDENS?

Recently I asked our board members why they visit the Bason Botanic Gardens.

Here's a response from one.

I go to the Bason because it is a haven of tranquillity in my busy life. I have the opportunity to walk or sit in peaceful surroundings, appreciating the beauty of nature. The picnic blanket that sits in the back of my car has never had so much use.

Everyone wants beauty in their lives and you get it at Bason. The beauty is in the design, the textures, a variety of shades of green and abundant mix of colour. In the elevation and views. In the sense of scale and scape. And while I have always been drawn to being in nature, there is something really quite special about the Bason Botanic Gardens. They certainly have a *je ne sais quoi* about them.

And there is now research to show why instinctively I

find this so healthy: the Japanese call it *shinrin-yoku*, literally, "forest-bathing" (sometimes also called "tree-bathing"). Forest-bathing is a practice that is not only physiologically healthy, but also great psychologically, and leads to happiness (I kid you not). There have been numerous studies on the physiological and psychological benefits of forest-bathing and the effects of *phytoncides* (the natural aromatherapy that you feel, for example, when you go on the Native Bush walk and immediately feel the pressures of the world drop away). You can find the science here; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2793341/>

Sanctuaries like the Bason Botanic Gardens are not only important for botanical and health reasons. We are also providing an important "time capsule" for the future. We are looking after not only the Gardens, but also future generations. Never before in our history have us humans been so far from merging with the natural world and so divorced from nature. The UN estimates that by 2050, 66% of the world's population will live in cities. And, according to a study sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency, the average American spends 93% of his or her

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

### 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:  
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Membership: Individual \$20; Family \$30; Corporate \$100; Life \$500  
Internet banking details are:

Account Name: Bason Botanic Gardens Trust Account

Account Number: 03-0791-0463019-00

Use your name as a reference and also please state whether this is a donation or membership subscription.

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The Treasurer, Bason Botanic Gardens Trust, PO Box 778, Wanganui

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time indoors. Now I know we are not Americans, but I certainly suspect we are on a similar trend here in NZ.

Hence our vision for the Bason Botanic Gardens: A Sanctuary for People and Plants.

And so, as I walk around the gardens, I dream of what legacy we are all leaving behind for our grandchildren and

## KIA ORA

The first few months as team leader at Bason Botanic Gardens has flown by! It's been a real pleasure watching the seasons change. The autumnal colours have been spectacular.

I have a very dedicated and committed team who I feel are a great asset to the garden. We have achieved a lot together in these months, individually in their respective areas, but also in the "teamwork" days I have instigated on a more regular basis. Some of the work we so far have

## PHOENIX CANARIENSIS

At Bason Gardens there are a number of Phoenix palms. Some are relatively uncommon; however the main one there is Phoenix canariensis, which hails from the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean. Most of the ones at the Bason were transplanted there by the District Council from places in town where they were growing too large. Examples of these are the ones forming an avenue leading up to the Homestead Garden from the Conservatories.



Generally, Phoenix palms are much too massive for a city section and are seldom seen in the suburbs now. The biggest concentration of them in Whanganui is by the Davis Library and Sarjeant Gallery in Queens Park. In people's gardens, they have largely replaced with more suitably sized palms, if height is sought. Queen and bungalow are the most commonly seen, although it is a pity that there aren't more native nikau palms around. Chinese fan palms are also common; though discouraged as can invade native forest.



great-grandchildren.

These are all the reasons I am drawn to the Bason Gardens. I hope you will be drawn to the Gardens too and want to share them with as many people as you can.

Rob Nesbit-Savage

completed are the large tasks of weeding, mulching and tidying the Phormium around the gardens, the carex on the lake side lawn, and recently the Daisy bank. Also working on the large rogues, the Maytenus being our biggest target.

I have enjoyed meeting the Trust members that I see, so please feel free to find me in the gardens when you're out there. You all have so much knowledge and I am very eager to learn!

Megan James

Apart from the massive size of the plants, other antisocial aspects of Phoenix palms are their huge root system and the mass of messy fruits that they drop. Also, the bases of the leaves are savage spikes, which can cause nasty wounds which cause inflammation; plus fragments of the spikes can be hard to find and remove. As a result, people are largely discouraged from planting it. There is another reason: birds carry the fruits, and there is a risk that, as with fan palms, the plant can become invasive in native forests.

It is interesting to look at the Phoenix plants at the Bason for the way that seeds can get distributed onto the trees, mainly by birds, and grow epiphytically. A notable one at the Bason has been the Moreton Bay fig, the fruits of which only become fertile in recent times, due to a wasp pollinator arriving in the district. Again, there are concerns that Moreton Bay fig could be spread into native forest and become a serious pest plant.

Phil Thomsen

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM of Bason Botanic Gardens Trust will take place at the Davis Lecture Theatre, Watt Street, at 7.00pm on Thursday, 15 August 2019.

The AGM will be followed at 7.30pm by a presentation by Lucky Wilbur who is a Consultant in Garden Design and Specialist Social Media Strategist currently based at Springvale Garden Centre.



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

## PHOTOS OF THE FARM

Further to our Autumn Newsletter, Kaye Neale has sent us some images of the Bason Botanic Gardens taken in 1960, when it was still a farm, and one from 1970 showing early plantings. Along with the photographs Kaye also sent a copy of a series of Stanley Bason's verses.

Here is an extract, a poem about spring, and a couple of old photographs of the farm.

*Just now are the months of Spring.  
So sing my hearties sing.  
Who wouldn't soar to heights and  
flights of wing.  
Why! Just now the bees won't even  
sting.*

*One has but to look around to  
realize,  
That the very cats and dogs do fraternise  
The young and old both wise and not so wise  
Bless my soul! Why should they not harmonize*

*My voice is done and none may dare call me scholar,  
Yet round the farm I still can yell and holler.  
As the cows and the harrows I follow,  
And I guess this beats the city squalor.*

*So we upon this harmony reflect.*



1980 image of lake and new plantings.

*The essential treatment would seem to be respect,  
That two (or more) participate is a fact we can't neglect  
Notes that strain and stray are curbed and checked.  
An endless time of Spring we'd find a bore,  
The corrective functions therefore  
Of other seasons are kept in store,  
Just fancy! We  
find they total  
four.*

## AT LAST A PLAQUE!!!

Since erected, there has been much comment about the "Villa Rustica" sculpture at the base of Millennium Hill. Shortly, well before Christmas we hope – we wouldn't want to rush it – an explanatory plaque describing the sculpture, its inspiration and acknowledging the artists, will be attached. Keep a look out for it!



We are extremely grateful for these Bason memorabilia. They will be committed to safe keeping, possibly at the Alexander Library.



The farm in 1970.



Bason  
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c/- PO Box 778, Wanganui

