

FERNGLEN NATIVE PLANT GARDENS NEWSLETTER

Summer 2022



Table of Contents

News from Fernglen.....	2
Annual Assessment of Pohutukawa Flowering, December 2022.....	5
Book Review: <i>The Arbornaut - A Life Discovering the Eighth Continent in the Trees Above Us</i> , by Meg Lowman.....	6
Where to Plant "Big Trees" in Auckland.....	7
The Unusual Ngaios at Warren Freer Park, Sandringham.....	8
The Unique Whau – <i>Entelea arborescens</i>	10
Native Trees and Shrubs Struggling during the Summer of 2022.....	11
What's happening at Fernglen?.....	12

News from Fernglen

by Kelly Hayward

Recently my mother, (Muriel Fisher's daughter) after a spring clean, gave me some past press clippings and a small painting pertaining to Fernglen.



A photograph of the painting by Joy Johansen circa 1970 of the entrance to Fernglen, when it was home to Bill and Muriel Fisher and a popular native plant nursery. This was prior to it transforming into Fernglen Native Plant Gardens and later becoming park under the then, North Shore City Council.

The painting depicts the cul-de-sac at Kauri Road, and the entrance and driveway by which Bill and Muriel Fisher accessed their home. Today the driveway is used to access Fernglen Gardens, arriving at the large grass area (where the house once stood) and flowing water feature. In the painting the camellia tree is dominant, very full with foliage almost in a semi circle shape, to the right of it is a frame in the shape of the entrance to a wharenu, a marae, a sign across it marked with the words, Fernglen Native Plants Nurseries. The nursery was very popular in the 1970s as a place to buy native plants. As a child I remember hanging around the grounds watching and listening to my grandparents give advise to others about how to plant and nurture their new purchases.

The painting was done in the early 1970s Joy Johansen. She features along with others in an article, among the collected press clippings, published in the New Zealand Woman's Weekly, dated July 1972, about a three day artists' workshop held at Fernglen. The article says 10 artists attended

the 'Outdoor Art School'. One photograph showcases some participants in workshop painting directly outside Bill and Muriel's house and another of Joy Johansen standing with an easel, in the bush, painting. The article says Bill and Muriel made scones and cups of tea available for the painters during their workshop. I can easily imagine them doing this, as my grandparents were always very keen visitors to the house have at least one cup of tea accompanied by a bite to eat.

Thanks to artist Lesley Alexander, the art of botanical painting has been taking place at Fernglen for some years now. Her group of botanical illustrators meet at Fernglen one Sunday each month and dedicate the afternoon to cultivating their craft.

The press clippings cover topics about the new and special plants growing at the gardens at the time, Muriel's conservation work, including at Pureora Forest, her books, and Bill and Muriel's winning of the prestigious Loder Cup. One newspaper clipping reported (unrecorded which publication) on the launch of her book, *Gardening with New Zealand Plants, Shrubs and Trees* (in conjunction with Janet Watkins and Betty Satchell) approx 300 people attended the book launch.

Now the newspaper and magazine clippings about Fernglen are collated in one big folder. The volume of clippings alone is an impressive tribute to the work carried out by the Fisher family at Fernglen, from the 1970s to 1990s. The folder will be on display during the Fernglen open day held on the **10th of April 2022 from 9:30am-3pm**, during the Ecofest North festival. This year there will be two garden tours on the day, highlighting rare and interesting plants in the gardens. Tours will be held at 10am and 1pm and, due to being under the traffic light setting of Red, please book for a tour by emailing fernflen.nz@gmail.com. Also during the Open Day will be history on the property, and some specialist plants for sale. It should be no surprise that morning and afternoon tea will also be on offer, a long time tradition at the Fisher property.

Check www.kaipatiki.org.nz/ecofest/ for this and other free events.

Stress on Plants

The unprecedented heat and dryness this summer has taken its toll on some species at Fernglen. Curator Steve Cook reported that there was little rain for six weeks from the 17th of December 2021 until the 5th of February 2022. He said, "There wasn't only the lack of rain, the daily average temperatures were higher than normal from October to February, putting extra heat stress on plants.

The *Halocarpus biformis* (pink pine) in the Alpine House, which had been doing nicely, died from the heat, also the *Aciphylla dieffenbachia* (endemic to the Chatham Islands) and at Ben's Ridge three young trees died. The *Cyathea colensoi* (mountain tree fern) near the trellis has badly burned leaves from relentless day after day sunshine. Even after 65mm rain in the past few days, the soil at 100mm depth at Ben's Ridge is still very dry."

Theft of Plants

If you are walking around Fernglen please keep an eye out for plant thieves. No one should be removing any plants, rocks or anything else from the gardens unless it is the curator Steve, or they are working during a working bee, held on the second Saturday morning each month. Of late, Ring Fern on the side of the track to Ben's Ridge has been taken, a King Fern has been dug out and a small ramarama has disappeared. This is really disappointing and sad as there is little doubt that these plants, once uprooted would not have survived for long in a new setting.

Take care

Kelly



Metrosideros perforata (white rata)

Annual Assessment of Pohutukawa Flowering, December 2022

by Neville Arbury

The season started with a 'bang'. There was noticeable flowering of many pohutukawas by the end of the second week of November - the signs were looking good! However, flowering had mainly finished a week to ten days before Christmas. A comparatively short flowering season.

What were the climatic factors that may have influenced flowering? A very long, dry summer extending from January to April 2021 and there was still very little rain until late May. Then followed an exceptionally mild winter in northern (pohutukawa) regions. Finally, in September/October there was heavy rainfall, enough to fill our water supply lakes.

What eventuated was a brilliant flowering of some pohutukawas in the Auckland region. However, flowering can best be described as erratic. I.e. it was possible to view a collection of similarly aged pohutukawas where half or two thirds would be in full flower, while the remainder were barely flowering at all. There appeared to be no distinct pattern to the flowering. Where the trees were in flower, there was often an incredible intensity of flowering and flower coverage of some trees where leaves were barely noticeable because of the number of flowers smothering the tree.

A further noticeable characteristic in 2021 was the range of colour among older specimens growing in Auckland, from a pink-red to orange-red to exceptionally dark red. Maori Princess, a pohutukawa cultivar, a favourite with council plantings over the past ten years, flowered consistently well throughout Auckland. *Metrosideros 'Mistral'*, a naturally occurring hybrid pohutukawa/northern rata, also used as a street tree, flowered superbly, just as pohutukawas were finishing their flowering.

Overall I would rate the flowering season 7/10, a high figure, attributable to the brilliance of the flowering of Auckland's pohutukawas. I am still waiting for the elusive mast year of 2010 when the city is resplendent in red flowers in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Book Review: *The Arbornaut - A Life Discovering the Eighth Continent in the Trees Above Us*, by Meg Lowman

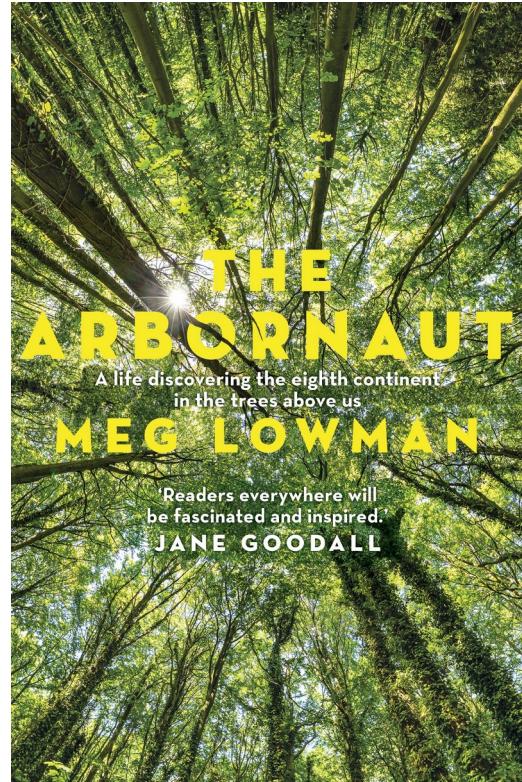
by Neville Arbury

Every now and then you come across a book that you simply cannot put down. This is high on the list of a book!

Meg Lowman, PhD aka "Canopy Meg", is an American biologist, educator, writer, editor and public speaker who pioneered the science of canopy ecology. She has been described by the Wall Street Journal as the "Einstein of Tree Tops". The author took tree climbing to new heights with her ingenious lifting techniques and developed sky-walking pathways among the trees leafy crowns.

As she hoisted herself into the canopy of trees in the early 1980s she discovered that upwards of half of all terrestrial creatures live high above our heads, not at ground level as scientists had previously assumed. And that in the upper crowns of trees, the majority of species were new to science. As she writes,

"No one would have guessed that a shy kid from rural upstate New York, a veritable geek who spent her childhood collecting wildflowers along roadsides, could change our view of the planet, exploring what she terms the eighth continent. Uncovering its secrets and by sharing tree-top wonders."



Meg Lowman tells her life story in 320 action-packed pages, first climbing solo in Australia's rainforests, then moving to measure tree growth in the north-eastern USA. The redwoods on the west coast of the USA are visited, before travelling to the Scottish highlands, and then to Penang, Malaysia to advise on the construction of a new canopy walkway while carrying out a biodiversity survey of the local forest.

Perhaps the most fascinating chapter concerns her experiences in Ethiopia. Her relationship with the Ethiopian orthodox church was critical in an endeavour to save Ethiopia's rapidly dwindling forest, where less than 3% of the original forest remained. Here, the only remaining forests were those surrounding the orthodox churches. Meg Lowman raised funds to enable locals to build stone walls around the remaining forests, protecting trees from goats and other animals. As this proved successful, areas were expanded and revegetation planting was carried out. The Government eventually came on board and in 2019, 352 million seedlings were grown in government nurseries and planted throughout Ethiopia.

I highly recommend this book. It is available in most bookshops.

Where to Plant “Big Trees” in Auckland

by Neville Arbury

Thanks to the Resource Management Act in 2012 that removed blanket protection of trees on private land, the rate of removal of mature trees in Auckland continues unchanged. There is no indication of action by the Auckland Council or government legislation to remedy this situation, so it is imperative that space is found for the planting of “big trees” on the Auckland isthmus. No longer can private properties be considered a possibility as the size of the average section shrink year by year. So, where can we plant “big trees” that can safely grow to a considerable size and provide some lungs for the city?

1. School grounds – With rising temperatures, and the intensity of summer sun there is a desperate need for shade in Auckland’s primary and secondary schools. It should be encouraged to think long-term and plant big trees.
2. Existing parks – Often underutilised as habitats for big trees.
3. Sides of motorways – Great potential for the planting of big trees where they don’t impede visibility. The present philosophy of planting short-lived grassed and shrubs is simply not working. The planting of forests lining of some German Autobahns could provide a model for such plantings.
4. Street trees – Where overhead power lines and underground services are not a problem, there is great potential here for the planting of carefully selected big tree species.
5. Inner city golf courses, where they still exist, could absorb large numbers of additional big trees.
6. Ellerslie and Avondale racecourses – Imperative to plant big trees in these two areas before parts are sold to finance these activities.

Note: All substantial plantings must in some way be covenanted to ensure the trees cannot be removed by a developer or council.

Big trees for Auckland include the following:

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|------------|
| • Coastal Mairie | • Northern Rata | • Tanekaha |
| • Hinau | • Puriri | • Taraire |
| • Kahikatea | • Rimu | • Titoki |
| • Karaka | • Pohutukawa | • Totara |
| • Kanuka | | |

The Unusual Ngaios at Warren Freer Park, Sandringham

by Neville Arbury

The large stand of *Myoporum laetum*, ngaio growing at the northern end of Warren Freer Park were planted very closely together. Probably around 20-30 years ago and have thrived in the very light free-draining soil that is found in the area. Because they are growing so close together, they have developed a quite unique form, being very upright and narrow with still narrow trunks whole the trees are now 7-8 metres tall.

When the south-westerly winds blow strongly, all the trees sway considerably, however, they support each other and show no sign of blowing over, even in severe storms. The form of these trees can be compared to that of other ngaios, often planted on the sides of motorways as part of revegetation planting. Here ngaios are invariably much shorter and bushier in appearance. Often planted to protect less hardy or slower-growing natives.



Myoporum laetum (ngaio) in Māngere

It will be interesting to observe this stand of ngaios over the next 5-10 years, as they are not overly long-lived trees. They are certainly very happy where they are!

Myoporum laetum, ngaio can be described as a fast-growing, drought-tolerant tree, reaching up to 10 metres and can be found on the Three Kings, North and South Island as far south as Otago and on the Chatham Island.

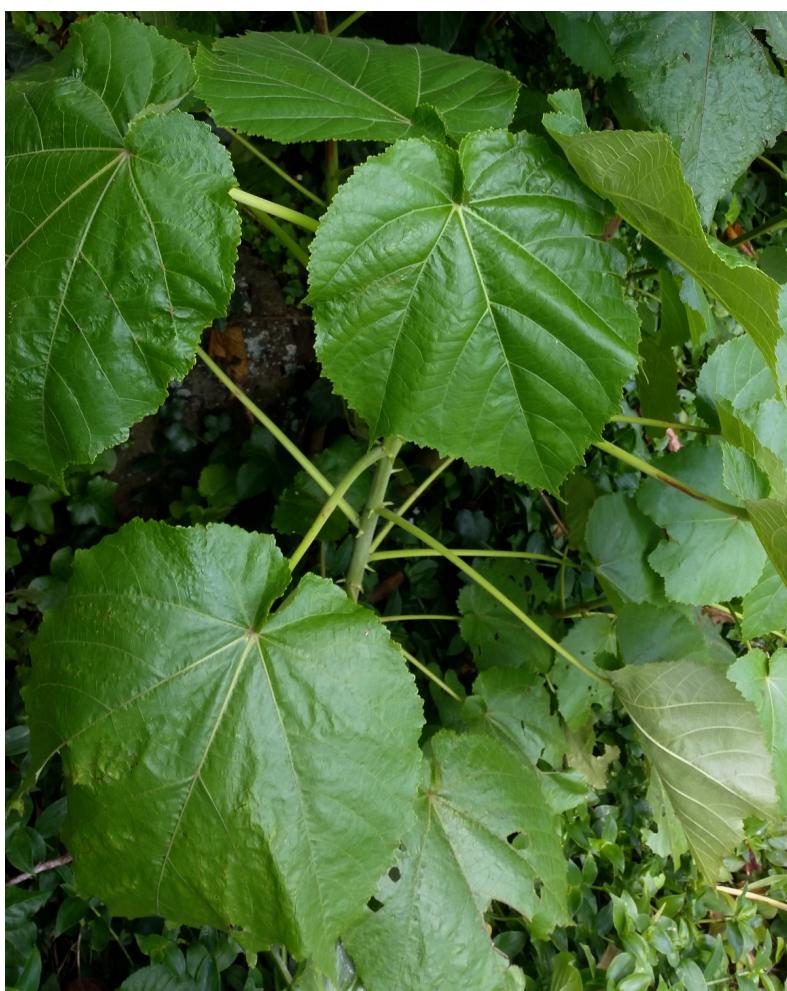
There are two other New Zealand species, the Kermadec ngaio, *Myoporum rapense* subs. *kermadecense*. It differs from the mainland form in having longer, narrower leaves. The other species, *Myoporum semotum*, found only on the Chatham Islands, is listed as a threatened species. Interestingly, the species is found on Pitt, South-East, Mangere and Little Mangere Islands but is not found on Chatham Island where the mainland ngaio, *Myoporum laetum* naturally occurs. The distinguishing features of the species are the smooth branchlets, wider leaves and larger flowers.

Also, to be found in New Zealand is the Australian ngaio, *Myoporum insulare*, commonly known in Australia as the Tasmanian boobialla. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was planted in coastal parts of the North Island where it thrived and hybrid forms of the boobialla and ngaio have been discovered in a number of coastal sites.

The Unique Whau – *Entelea arborescens*

by Neville Arbury

Unlike many of our native plants, the genus *Entelea* has only one species. *Entelea arborescens*, which is found only in New Zealand. With its large green leaves, the whau has an appearance quite unlike any other New Zealand native tree. Normally found growing on forest margins and streamsides. Being frost tender it is restricted to northern parts of New Zealand, the Three Kings Islands to the Mahia peninsula in the east and western Waikato. There are also the odd pockets of whaus in the Wairarapa, around Wellington and western Nelson.



Whau is a very fast-growing tree, eventually becoming a multi-branched specimen up to 10 metres tall. The lifespan of a whau is not long, possibly 10 years, but no longer. One of its most interesting and distinctive characteristics are the prickly seed capsules that contain many very small black seeds. These hard seeds can remain dormant in the soil for a long time before germinating and are fire-resistant. Clusters of white flowers with yellow stamens cover the trees in spring, early summer. Because the wood is so light, Maori used it for floats on fishing nets.

As a nursery plant, it is exceptionally fast-growing. As a young nurseryman growing whaus, we would estimate that we had at most 6-8 weeks after potting up young whau plants before they would be rootbound.

Native Trees and Shrubs Struggling during the Summer of 2022

by Neville Arbury

For the third summer in a row, the Auckland Regions is experiencing a severe drought. This summer is even worse than the previous two, with little or no rain and strong prevailing winds as at the time of writing, January 21. It is 28 days since any rain fell in Auckland. Even some of our hardy coastal natives are beginning to suffer. Below is a list of some natives that I have observed "feeling the strain" of a long, hot, dry summer.

Griselinia littoralis – As per usual, drying then dying! No surprise here.

Rimu – Especially newly planted specimens. The foliage turns brown in patches before the plant dies.

Kauri – Any Kauri less than 5 years old is in grave danger of dying as the root system is still quite underdeveloped.

Rewarewa – Suffer terribly from thrip attacks in hot summers. Leading to defoliation and eventually death.

Titoki – Those planted as street trees in the winter of 2021, especially in heavy clay soils, are really struggling. Symptoms are bare branches where leaves have fallen. They can be revived with deep watering and mulching.

Taraire – A similar tale to titokis, except they are even less resistant to hot, dry summers. When they are dry they die.

Kawakawa – Commonly known as a hardy coastal plant. All over Auckland leaves are hanging limp and branches are dying.

Coprosma robusta – As the name suggests for this very common coprosma, it is a very hardy plant. Many specimens in revegetation plantings can be observed drooping because of the severe lack of water.

Pohutukawa – Yes, even the hardy pohutukawa in many sites around Auckland is shedding masses of leaves and struggles to survive.

What's happening at Fernglen?

Working bees

Regardless of the weather, working bees occur at Fernglen **on the second Saturday of every month from 9am onwards, until about 12 noon.**

The working bee is a great way to meet others, learn more about native plants, weeds and pest control. There is always a job to be done in the garden or in the education room.

No gardening experience is necessary and all ages and abilities are welcome. Gloves and gardening tools can be supplied.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Educational tours

Are you involved with a school or an education group and would like to learn about New Zealand native plants? A unique collection of plants from all over New Zealand grows at Fernglen. To see what is on offer please contact us

on email: fernnglen.nz@gmail.com

or phone: 021 236 5800

Room hire

The Fernglen Education Room is available for hire at very competitive rates. Please contact us

on email: fernnglen.nz@gmail.com

or phone: 021 236 5800

Naylor Love

Naylor Love are committed to seeking sustainable construction practices. Their history in New Zealand makes an interesting read on their website:

<https://www.naylorlove.co.nz/about-us/our-history/>



**Naylor
Love**



Botanical Art at Fernglen

Interested?

contact
Lesley Alexander
021 161 7070 or
email lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com