

# FERNGLEN NATIVE PLANT GARDENS NEWSLETTER

Spring 2022

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| News from Fernglen.....   | 2  |
| A Look at our Most Dramatic Astelia – <i>Astelia Chathamica</i> .....   | 7  |
| Book review: <i>The Lonely Islands, the Evolutionary Phenomenon That is New Zealand</i> by Terry Thomson..... | 8  |
| The Tragic Tale of <i>Myoporum Deibile</i> .....  | 9  |
| The Intriguing Story of Granny Smith and her Famous Apple.....  | 10 |
| <i>Paesia Scaberula</i> , the Hardest Fern at Fernglen.....   | 11 |
| New Plantings of Native Groundcovers at Fernglen.....   | 12 |
| What's Happening at Fernglen?.....  | 13 |

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## News from Fernglen

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by Kelly Hayward, photos by Steve Cook

During a Pest Free Kaipātiki meeting in 2017 there was mention the team were looking for an office space from which to operate. At Fernglen Gardens the office under the education room was not being occupied, except as a storage area by some dusty feathered friends. Jo Knight and Keith Salmon came to inspect the Fernglen office and see if it was useful. They were greeted with about 20 taxidermy mounted birds, the largest a Canadian swan whose neck stretched upward to my waist. The birds had been gifted to Fernglen by a school and, had at times been used in education tours. Jo was not deterred by them or the effort required to make the space attractive to PFK staff and they soon busied themselves in preparing a functional office.

Five years later Pest Free Kaipatiki's core work carrying out pest and weed control, kauri protection and community engagement and education in conservation has flourished expediently and they've outgrown the office space at Fernglen. They have now moved to their premises at 3 Ross Road Glenfield. Pest Free Kaipātiki's team were a friendly and inspiring addition to Fernglen, we will miss them and wish them well in their new headquarters.

The peaceful, secluded office space at Fernglen (new carpet recently installed) is available for hire to someone who appreciates trees (with the odd view of a kākā). Please contact me if you are know someone who may be interested.



*Xeronema callistemon*

We are very happy to be partnered with Ground for Good as of the 4th of October 2022 onwards. They have a fantastic initiative that will reduce cup pollution going to land fill and, when you purchase a coffee using a returnable cup from any of the three cafes below, a donation is made to The Fernglen Native Plants Gardens Educational Trust. The North Shore cafes supporting Fernglen are:

- Little Creatures, Hobsonville
- Holy Shot, Takapuna
- New Brew, Albany

How do you get a returnable cup? Join Ground for Good and Download the AgainAgain app. To find out more visit [www.groundforgood.co.nz](http://www.groundforgood.co.nz) and the Fernglen website for more updates [www.fernenglengardens.nz](http://www.fernenglengardens.nz)



*Carmine rata*

At the North Shore Home and Garden Show 28-30th of October, Bonny Faulkner-Hollis of Nature Haven is running a raffle; the proceeds of it are kindly being donated to the Fernglen Native Plant Gardens Educational Trust. Nature Haven specializes in the sale of **Naturally Neem** products specializing in natural insecticides. Check out [www.naturallyneem.co.nz](http://www.naturallyneem.co.nz).

Being considered and nominated, as a recipient of fund-raising efforts is very humbling and much appreciated, it is one indicator the voluntary work we do is worthwhile and that we're supported by the community.

Take care

*Kelly*



Pukatea planted near stream



Puriri flowers



*Pseudowintera axillaris* (lowland horopito) at Bens Ridge

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## A Look at our Most Dramatic Astelia – *Astelia Chathamica*

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by Neville Arbury

Near the entrance to Fernglen is a cluster of silver plants. These are specimens of *Astelia chathamica*. As the name implies, they are from the Chatham Islands. Once common on the main island and Pitt island, there are now only scattered groups on rock sites. The numbers of *Astelia chathamica* have declined dramatically as a result of burning and grazing. The plant's status is vulnerable, a conservation category meaning there is a critical need for active protection.

Fortunately, the plant can be propagated quite easily by seed or by division. An excellent plant to cultivate in the home garden. And it can be successfully grown in large containers. This astelia prefers to grow in full sun or partial shade and in soil that is well-drained.



*Astelia chathamica* in Dunedin, (by [diggityd](#), CC BY-NC)

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## Book review: *The Lonely Islands, the Evolutionary Phenomenon That is New Zealand* by Terry Thomson

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by Neville Arbury,

The publication is essentially about why New Zealand has the plants and animals that it has. It explores who their ancestors were and where they came from. The Author examines what happened to them after they arrived and what caused them to take on their modern forms.

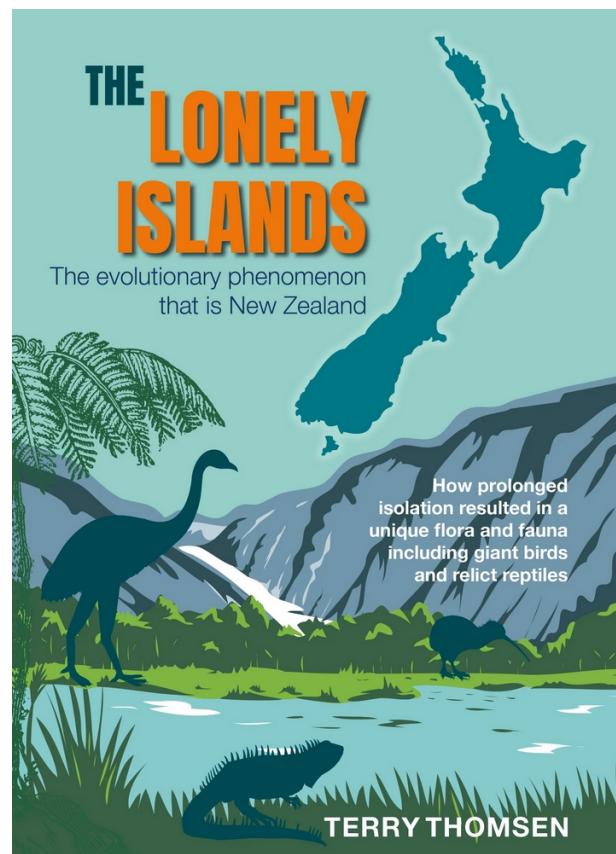
Starting with Gondwanaland, when New Zealand was laden with plants and animals, the evolution of New Zealand is traced through many major events. Eventually, New Zealand becomes isolated in the South West Pacific Ocean, 1600 kilometres from the nearest major land mass. And yet, life kept arriving! In this isolation, the islands ended up with a natural history unlike anything else in the world.

The author notes that many types of organisms that are widespread on continents are absent or very scarce in New Zealand. And that many of the most noticeable plants and animals of Australia are absent in New Zealand. As is common with other remote islands, most of New Zealand's species are endemic, 80% of plant species and 95% of insect species.

Unfortunately, human arrival has not been kind to our native animals and plants, forest cover has fallen from 80% to 23% while wetlands are now 1/10 of former areas. The author also notes that there has been a massive invasion by exotic plants over the past 150 years.

Extensively researched, this publication is very highly recommended for anyone with an interest in our native plants and animals. I will finish this review by quoting the final paragraph of the book:

*"The cost and effort of conservation are the prices we pay to maintain the precious remnants of New Zealand's native flora and fauna. Humans have wreaked disaster upon New Zealand's plants and animals. Yet, without human intervention now, most of the country's native vertebrates and many of its invertebrates and plants would slide towards extinction. Intervention may be costly, but the retention of what is left of New Zealand's native life is its reward."*



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## The Tragic Tale of *Myoporum Debole*

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by Neville Arbury

Very sadly this low-growing, sprawling ground cover plant is now presumed to be extinct! Previously there were two localities on the west coast of North Island near Kawhia Harbour and Raglan Harbour. The last known population at Kawhia disappeared in the early 1980s, the result of sheep, goats and coastal erosion. The Raglan population was apparently wiped out by fire. The tragedy is that the plant is quite easily propagated by both cuttings and seeds. I have not seen the plant since 1984 when I worked at Platt's Native Plant Nursery in Albany. We propagated plants by cuttings regularly, knowing that the plant could no longer be found growing naturally. When visiting Kawhia and Raglan over the years I have searched areas where this plant should be found but to no avail.

Believe it or not, *Myoporum debile* is grown as a garden plant in Australia and England, where it can be regularly purchased from garden centres.

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## The Intriguing Story of Granny Smith and her Famous Apple

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by Neville Arbury

While in no way related to native plants, the story is an intriguing one and worth relating to. Often described as the world's most valuable, one with no faults and many virtues! The woman was Maria Ann Smith, better known as Granny Smith. The apple Granny Smith is unique among apples. There is none that is equal for cooking purposes, is a splendid eating apple and stores better than most varieties.

Granny Smith came to Australia from England in the early 1800s. Her family bought a few acres in what is now Eastwood about 20 kilometres from Sydney. Granny Smith had a stall in the city selling fruit from her orchard. All her produce was packed in cases labelled "From Granny Smith's Farm". There are numerous stories of how the first Granny Smith tree was grown. An account published in the Tasmanian Courier in the 1890s is the most accepted story by a number of horticultural writers.

The story goes along those lines:

In 1807 Granny Smith returned to her home with some of her apple cases. At the bottom of one of these were the remains of some Tasmanian apples. The apples were quite rotten and Granny Smith emptied the case on the bank of the creek that ran through her farm. Some years later a twelve-year-old boy picked an apple from a tree that had grown on the bank of the creek. He raced to find Granny Smith exclaiming that it was the best apple he had ever eaten. Granny investigated and as a result, she started propagating this new variety. Eventually, Granny Smith has enough 'new apples' to take them to Sydney markets where they were displayed in cases labelled, "from Granny Smith". The new variety won immediate favour and brought higher prices than other apples. Fellow orchardists were keen to grow the new apple and soon Granny Smith was adding to her income by supplying young trees to others in the trade.

An interesting note! At the time of Granny Smith's discovery, only three varieties of apples were grown in Australia. This changed very quickly in the early twentieth century, especially in Tasmania, the "Apple Island". In 2014 on a visit to Tasmania I spent an afternoon at an apple museum, astounded at the number of apple varieties grown on this fascinating island.

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## *Paesia Scaberula*, the Hardest Fern at Fernglen

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by Neville Arbury

On the walk to Ben's Ridge, where you reach the rotary Kauri Grove, this open area is usually covered with *Paesia scaberula*, sometimes known as the scented fern. This particular fern breaks all the rules for ferns. It grows best in an open sunny position, thriving in poor clay soils.

You can observe large clumps of this fern growing on farmland in many parts of New Zealand. Because of the extremely dry past summers, our extensive patch of *Paesia scaberula* has suffered considerably, but I have no doubt, given reasonable growing conditions this summer, that the patch will fully recover. Endemic to New Zealand, the fern can be found throughout both islands and the Chatham islands. Sadly seldom seen for sale, there is a desperate need for a specialist native fern nursery.



*Paesia scaberula*, ring fern (mātata)

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## New Plantings of Native Groundcovers at Fernglen

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by Neville Arbury

From the coast to alpine areas, the New Zealand flora has a considerable number of quite distinct ground covers, that on careful observation, can be seen in most native habitats. Not only are they fascinating to look at, but for the home gardener, they can be incredibly useful in helping to suppress weeds and creating an interest in gardening at ground level.

There are native ground covers that prefer full sun through to heavy shade, from dry coastal conditions to swamp! The various ground covers scattered throughout the garden, invariably are of interest to visitors. The additional thirteen ground covers planted quite recently extend our collection which will be added to as plants can be sourced.

Plant list (those planted September/October 2022):

- *Acaena caesiiglauca*
- *Acaena inermis 'purpurea'*
- *Leptinella calcarea*
- *Leptinella dioica 'small-leaved form'*
- *Leptinella pusilla*
- *Leptinella squalida*
- *Leptinelle squalida 'Platt's Black'*
- *Lobelia angulate*
- *Lobelia angulate 'large-leaf form'*
- *Mazus novaezeelandiae*
- *Mazus radicans*
- *Selliera radicans 'fine-leaved form'*
- *Selliera radicans 'Auckland West Coast form'*

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## What's Happening at Fernglen?

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### 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com)