

# FERNGLEN NATIVE PLANT GARDENS NEWSLETTER

Spring 2024

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## News from Fernglen

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*text and photos by Kelly Hayward*

Just prior to the evening light extending into spring, we hosted Tauhinu Cubs at a Fernglen twilight event. The children, aged between 8-11 years old, already knew a lot about our native forest, and it was wonderful to cement this knowledge with activities in which they were interested and engaged. There were seedlings planted, bird identification, and just on dusk, glow worm spotting and moth enticing.



Sharon talking about native bats



Helen assisting planting native seedlings

It was enthusiastic teenagers from St Mary's Youth group that came to move mulch for miles during the September working bee. Their solid effort moved a mountain of mulch for which the trees at Ben's Ridge will benefit greatly from over the drier summer months.

In September we farewelled curator Deborah Colson who has taken a full time position closer to home. She worked hard at the gardens, and she has left them in great shape. Her efforts exposed rocks and stepping stone paths not seen for a long time! Long time committee member, Mandy was farewelled at the November working bee. She has been generous in her time, volunteering at working bees, open days and providing her lovely art used in Fernglen signage. We look forward to visiting her when she has settled into her new home at Great Barrier Island. A regular at working bees, Daniel, will now join the committee, for which we are grateful.



Deborah's farewell



Mandy and Buffy leaving

Fernglen is at its best when spring flowers are everywhere to be seen. Kumarahoë, *Pomaderris hamiltonii*, Poor Knights Lilly, *Xeronema callistemon*, and kowhai have been prolific in colour. Among the florishing flowers, pretty daisy like flowers of *Oleria cheesemanii* stand out. Birds are busy too, morepork very active in the wee hours until dawn when they're joined by hums, chirps and squeaks from a variety of birds that hangout in the gully at Fernglen.



Poor Knights Lilly, *Xeronema callistemon*, with 24 flowers this year



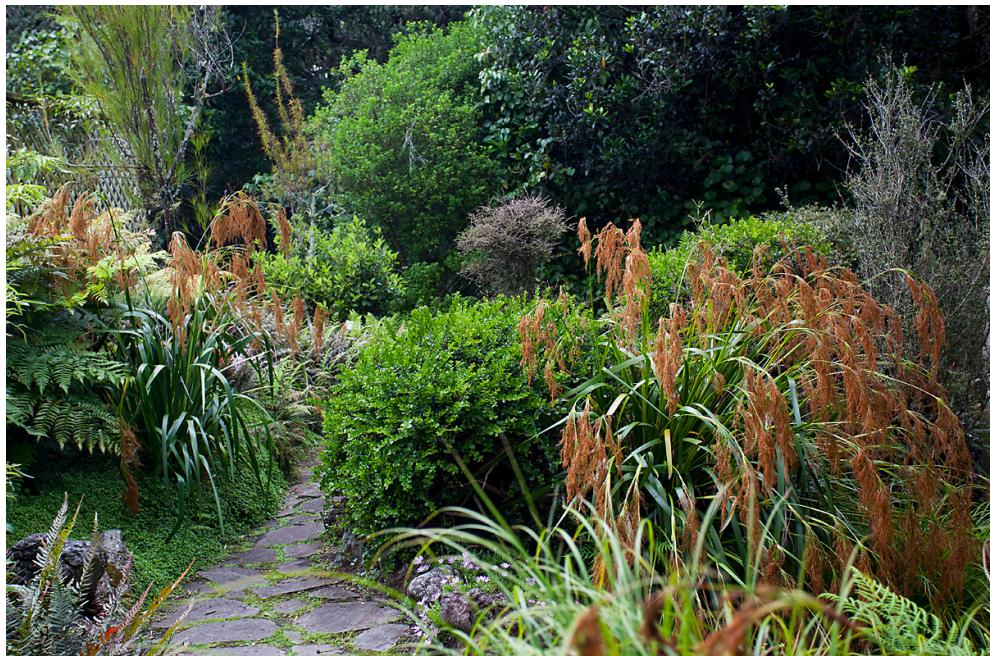
*Oleria cheesemanii*

As the end of the year approaches, now seems a good time to thank everyone for their support this year in helping Fernglen to grow and thrive, there is so much work behind the scenes, Marcus and Andrea putting this newsletter together, Nev for writing it and overseeing planting, Steve for keeping the maintenance of the lights and water running at the gardens, Ngaire for weeding and watering, Nicky, Mandy, Jude, Rosemary for your continued assistance in Fernglen matters, Sharon & Helen for educational support. The tasks mentioned with their names are only a fraction of their efforts. Look out for new improvements being made at Fernglen in 2025, additional seating

outside the education room, more signage, and additions to the grass area are on the agenda. For this we thank Auckland Council and Kaipātiki Local Board members for their continued vision, work and support of the gardens.

We're excited Ecofest (EcoMatters Environment Trust) is on the agenda again, Fernglen's annual Open Day is locked in for Sunday the 6th of April 2025. There will be garden tours, seed and propagating workshops, Lesley Alexander demonstrating botanical illustrating, and information and history about Fernglen. Remember to bring cash to buy 'harder to find' native plants and it is a great opportunity to seek out advice about what to plant, where, and when, in your own garden or reserve. Look forward to seeing you there. Meantime, wishing you a safe and merry Christmas.

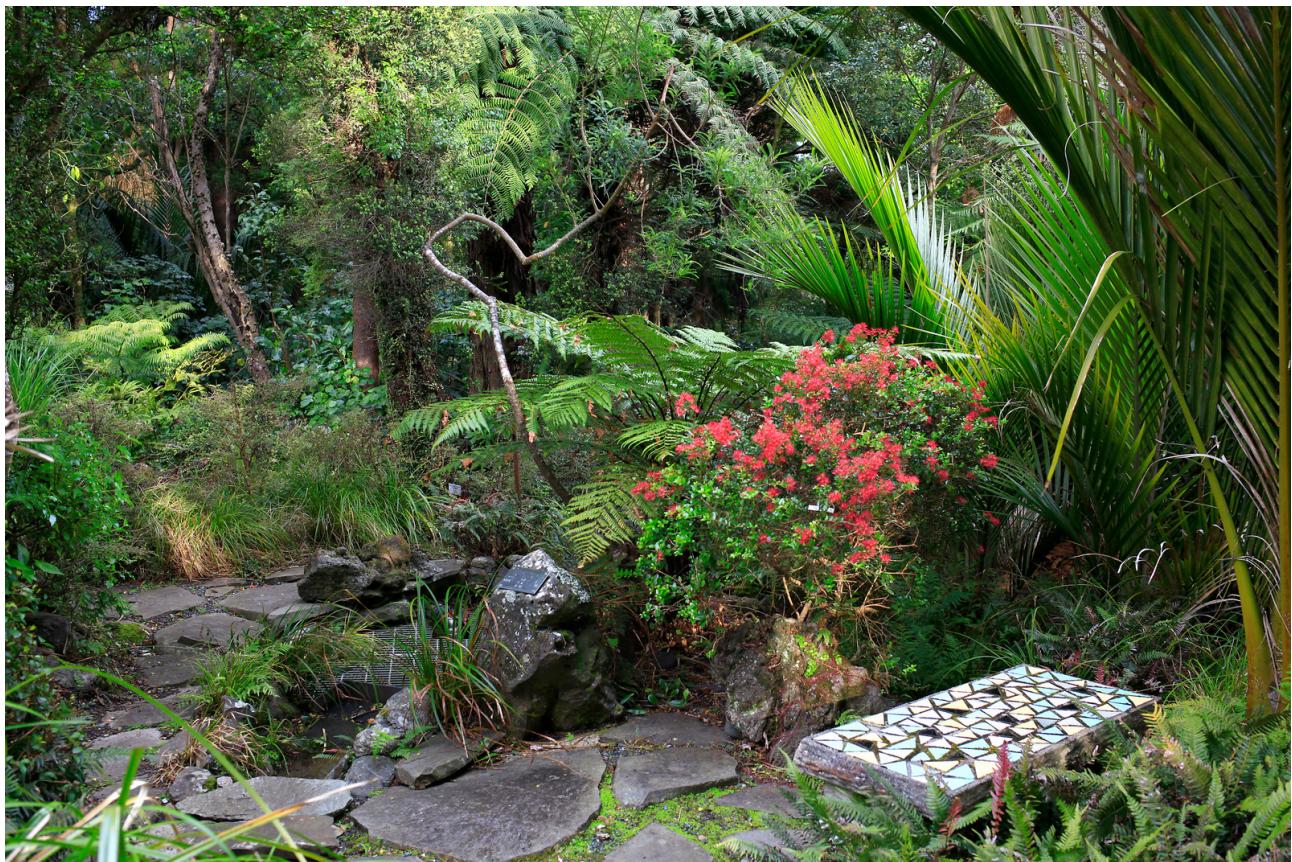
P.S Check out the page for Connor Harris' training offer held at Fernglen



*Machaerina sinclaririi* left and right of the walkway



Prostrate kōwhai, *Sophora prostrata*



# Fernglen Gardens Community Offer

Greetings Everyone!

My name is Connor Harris, the Badger making space in the treehouse (lower education room) in Fernglen gardens.

Currently, a 6 AM morning class is being facilitated in the treehouse and I am looking to expand the availability of training to more community members.

There are two beginning offers that I want to extend to Friends of Fernglen:

1. **Discounted private training** - Either 1-on-1, or bring up to 2 friends for an hour training session. This hour will be tailored for the audience and focused on self-defense.  
- Normally \$65, discounted for Fernglen \$40.
2. **New evening class for Friends of Fernglen** - Join a class alongside your community to learn, develop and grow together.  
- \$25 weekly members

For questions, queries or requests for training, reach out to me (Connor Harris) by text or email.

Best of luck and kind regards,

*Connor*



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## The Intriguing Fern Thriving Near Ben's Ridge

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by Neville Arbury

The slightly unusual fern growing in full sun near the entrance of Ben's Ridge is *Paesia scaberula*. This fern has a number of common names including lace fern, scented fern and pig fern. Unlike almost all other ferns, this terrestrial fern only grows in open sunny sites. It is not successful when positioned in shady areas. Endemic to New Zealand, the fern is found throughout the country, commonly seen thriving in farmland where it often forms quite extensive populations.

In summer a sweet, musky fragrance is released in the heat of the sun, hence the common name scented fern. The extensive display at Fernglen has been there for many years. Requiring little to no attention, always attracting attention from visitors. "How can a fern grow in such a situation?" is a typical question. The answer of course being that *Paesia scaberula* is the exception to ferns normal habitat.

Unfortunately, this fern is seldom seen for sale. However, if available, plant in winter to allow the plant time to become established before the first summer in the ground. After that the fern will thrive for many years.

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# Outstanding New Native Landscaping at North Shore Hospital

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by Neville Arbury

At the newly opened Totara Haumata building, the latest addition to the North Shore Hospital is a superbly designed and planted native garden. In contrast to so many newly planted gardens where the usual response is, "That's appalling landscaping", this new large planting is quite outstanding. Plants have been well spaced out with extensive use of ground covers filling the gaps between taller specimens. A wide range of natives have been used in the planting. All appropriate for Auckland growing conditions and the heavy clay soils that are typical of the North Shore. A bark mulch has been applied throughout the garden, suppressing weed growth and helping with water retention over the hot, dry months. What really appealed was that this planting has longevity, it will still be looking impressive in years to come.

Plantings included:

- *Chionochloa flavicans*
- *Dianella nigra*
- *Libertia ixoides*
- *Libertia peregrinans*
- *Metrosideros carminea*
- *Metrosideros perforata*
- *Phormium cookianum*

Ground covers included:

- *Acaena inermis*
- *Coprosma acerosa*
- *Coprosma 'Hawera'*
- *Muehlenbeckia axillaris*
- *Pimela prostrata*
- *Selliera radicans*

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## Book Review: *Planting our World* by Stefano Mancuso

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by Neville Arbury

This prolific Author has once again produced a masterpiece in this publication titles '*Planting our World*'. Previous publications include the '*Nation of Plants*', '*The incredible Journey of Plants*', '*The Revolutionary Genius of Plant*' and '*Brilliant Green The Surprising History and Science of Plant Intelligence*'.

The basic theme of the book is what the author calls 'The green print of the world'.

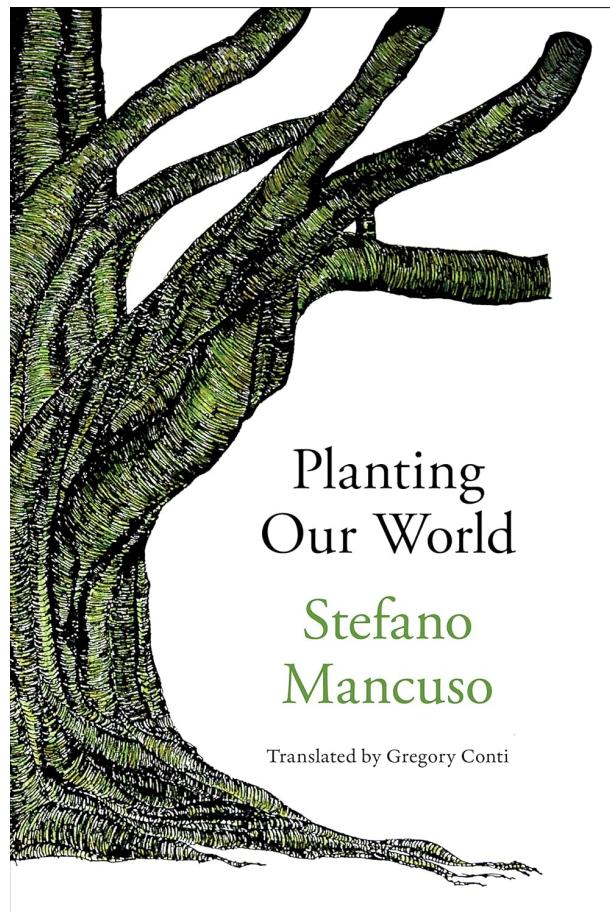
*"Plants are the nervous system, the map or plan on which the world we live is built. Not seeing this plan, failing to use it in planning our world, believing that we humans have now placed ourselves above nature, is one of the greatest dangers to the survival of our species!"*

In this publication the author includes an enormous amount of material often presented in an extremely entertaining fashion. Although the book is translated from Italian, the author's sense of humour and love for recalling fascinating anecdotes shine through many pages. Some of the chapter headings provide a guideline for what is covered in this book:

Planting Liberty, Planting Cities, Planting the Underground, Planting Music, Planting Time, Planting Knowledge, Planting Law and Order and Planting the Moon.

Possibly the chapter titled 'Planting the Underground' was the most fascinating chapter, where the author writes extensively about trees being masters of mutual aid. Here he relates the story of a New Zealand kauri stump with no leaves or other organs capable of performing photosynthesis, continuing to remain alive, possibly being supported by the root systems of nearby kauri trees. This he refers to as the phenomenon of root grafting.

Yet another fascinating botanical publication by this prolific author. Very readable for anyone with an interest in plants. Very highly recommended.



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# The Impact of Typhoon Yagi on the Trees of Hanoi, Vietnam

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by Neville Arbury

On a recent visit to Hanoi, just two weeks after Typhoon Yagi had swept through various Asian countries, I was able to observe the damage to so many trees in Hanoi.

Vietnam, particularly the north was hard hit by this particular typhoon, 291 were killed, 2,000 injured, 255,000 homes damaged and 300,000 hectares of crops were inundated with flood water in Hanoi, a city renowned for its mature specimen trees. There were 20,000 fallen trees and many others had severely damaged limbs. The importance of large trees in Hanoi cannot be underestimated, as they provide shelter and shade for the locals. Just outside my apartment there were majestic trees up to 15 metres high. This is quite typical throughout Hanoi, as there are 1.7 million trees within the city limits, many very old! According to reports, a massive clean up operation was immediately launched involving both professionals and volunteers, who quickly cleared the main streets allowing vital traffic to move unhindered. The next stage of recovery that I observed, continues with many Hanoi arborists working carefully to remove damaged limbs. Where trees were blown over completely in some areas, new specimen trees have already been planted and carefully staked.

Outside of Hanoi on motorways leading in various directions, the roadside plantings always a feature to be admired have been severely damaged. Kilometres of trees are sadly totally destroyed or suffering significant damage.

As for crop damage bananas, usually so plentiful in Hanoi, and many varieties available, suddenly were quite scarce. The same applied to passion fruit. My Vietnamese friends told me this was because of the damage caused by typhoon Yagi.

Knowing Hanoi well, this was my sixth visit, I am aware of how well the local authorities are prepared for extreme weather events. To absorb and manage colossal amounts of water, there are eight large lakes and many smaller ones within the city. Pavements are raised, drains are very large and cleared regularly. As well, there is a large pumping station providing flood protection for about 6.5 million people. This system is designed to respond quickly to any sudden flooding.

I will be very interested next year when I return to Hanoi, to see how all the new specimens are growing. Hopefully no more typhoons in the near future!

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## Book Review: *Miro, the Little Brown Kiwi* by Kelly Lynch

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by Neville Arbury

While primarily a children's book aimed at ages 8-9, this publication is very informative about the North Island brown kiwi, one of five species of kiwi.

The author provides a detailed description of the birds most distinguishing features; feathers, beak and legs, how distinctive they are compared to almost all other native birds, and yet how effective they are as part of the kiwis unique lifestyle.

The habitat where kiwis live is outlined and well illustrated with superb photography. The nocturnal feeding habit of kiwis is explained, how they feed and their particular diet, "A market place of food" awaits kiwi every night! The battle of Miro with a giant juicy worm is especially well described.

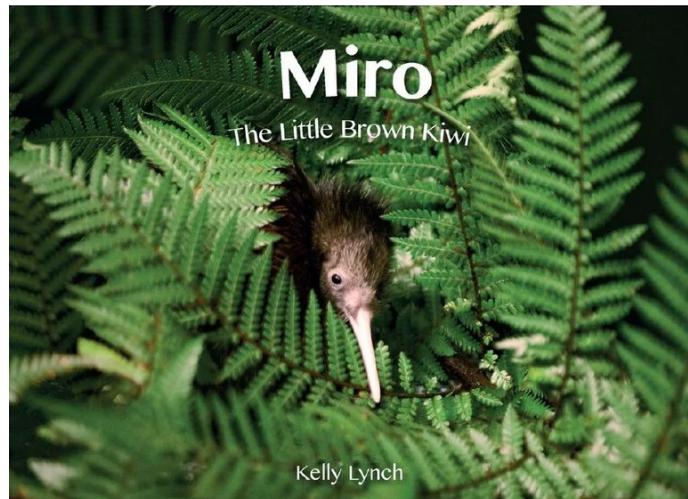
"Why is Miro so hungry?", the author ponders? Because she has just laid an egg, an egg almost 10 times the size of a chicken egg, and one that takes up nearly all the space in Miro's body. Miro's partner Mary has sat on the egg keeping it warm until it hatched. Unlike other kiwi species where this task is shared by partners. Once hatched, the baby kiwi fends for itself, instincts guiding the young kiwi.

The author outlines the risks for kiwi, ferrets, stoats, weasels, and dogs. Even though kiwis can use their powerful legs to defend themselves, particularly young kiwis are at risk.

Towards the end of the book, facts about kiwi and a guide to where kiwis can be safely seen, are excellent additions to the story of Miro.

With outstanding photography and simple, but informative writing, the story of the little brown kiwi is superbly told. Highly recommended for all New Zealand children.

Just as an aside, I reviewed this book while living and teaching English in Hanoi, Vietnam. My English language students found the book fascinating, and at a perfect level for their intermediate English.



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## Some Lesser Known Natives in the ‘Old Garden’

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by Neville Arbury

*Todea barbara*:



On the left hand side of the path near the top of the old garden is a very mature specimen of the endangered fern *Todea barbara*. It has been here as long as I can remember and in the past few years has developed a small trunk. Found only in coastal areas or near stream sides, this fern is one of the few native ferns not endemic to New Zealand. It can be found in south east Australia and South Africa. Threats to the survival of this fern are habitat destruction and competition from introduced weed species e.g. pampas grass.

### *Coprosma neglecta*:



Growing near the base of the world's rarest tree, *Pennentia baylisiana*, is a healthy specimen of this lesser known *Coprosma neglecta*. This species naturally occurs on the Surville Cliffs in the Norths Cape area, can grow up to 700mm tall and has small glossy green leaves. It will thrive in full sun or dappled light. There is also an excellent specimen in the coprosma collection at Ben's Ridge.

### *Pittosporum obcordatum*:

Just below the *Coprosma neglecta* is a superb specimen of the rare *Pittosporum obcordatum*, with its very distinctive upright habit and slender divaricating branches. This plant is a perfect example of what can be termed sporadic distribution, with specimens found near Kaitaia, Wairoa, Akaroa and Lake Manapouri. Sadly, very seldom seed for sale, seed is difficult to obtain, and propagating from cuttings has proved problematic.

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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)

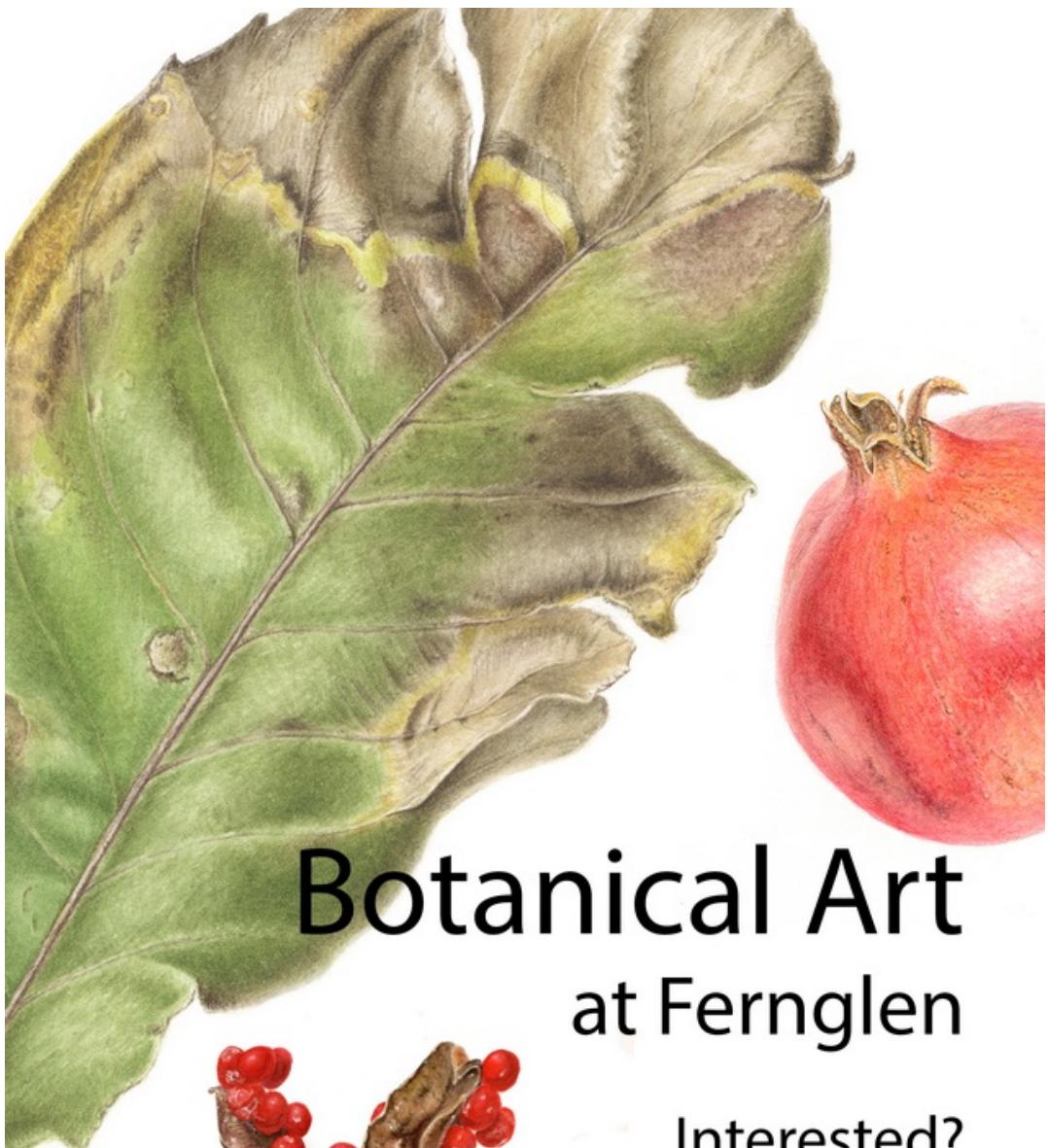
or phone: 021 236 5800

### 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



# Botanical Art at Fernglen

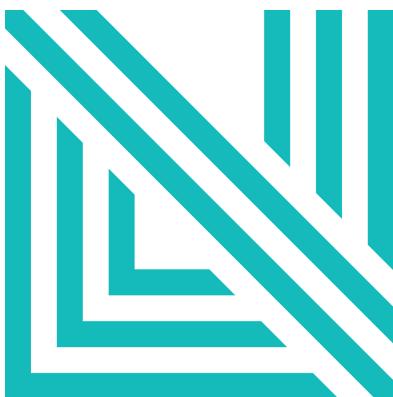
Interested?

contact  
Lesley Alexander  
021 161 7070 or  
email [lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com](mailto:lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com)

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# Naylor Love

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