

Fernglen Native Plant Gardens



Summer Newsletter 2013

*New Year greetings
to all of our Friends*



- 1. News from Fernglen**
- 2. Book Review: 'Auckland's Remarkable Urban Forest' by Mike Wilcox**
- 3. A Look Back in History: James Hector - An Amazing Early Scientist.**
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- 5. A look at our native *Gunnera*.**
- 6. Winstone's new and noteworthy plant list from 1980.**

1. Summer at Fernglen – New plants for the Gardens.

Well despite the very hot weather in Auckland recently, the Fernglen Gardens are surviving. The summer tidy up has begun with watering, weeding and cutting back spent foliage for a start. Maintenance of reserves is carried out largely by volunteers, with Council providing some materials such as potting soil.

If any of the Friends would like to potter and offer a bit of time helping out, this would be much appreciated. Assistance would be given.

We have several additions to the divaricating shrub collection at Ben's Ridge – these are :

Coprosma crassifolia
Coprosma intertexta
Coprosma neglecta
Coprosma pedicellata
Coprosma propinqua
Coprosma propinqua var laticaula
Coprosma wallii
Myrsine divaricata



Coprosma neglecta
Photo permission Jeremy Rolfe
<http://www.nzpcn>.



Myrsine divaricata
Photo by the late John Smith-Dodson <http://www.nzpcn>

There are quite a few species in flower or berry in the rockery, highlighting the fact that there is always something of interest to view at Fernglen throughout the seasons :

Parahebe catarractae (just inside the gate)
Pimelea prostrata (end of one of the troughs near the gate)
Carmichaelia egmontiana – pink-mauve flowers (trough)
Pimelea oreophila – white flowers in a tub- front of the alpine house
Rubus parvus – with raspberry-like berries (rockery on bush margin)
Myosotis petiolata var. *pottsiana* – forget-me-not family, white flowers
Gunnera prorepens – with bright red upright berries
Dianella nigra – deep purple berries (spreading ngaio gazebo)
Wahlenbergia albo-marginata – harebell



Parahebe catarractae
With permission from
<http://www.hebesoc.org/nz>

We trust you will have the chance to visit Fernglen and enjoy a stroll around some or all of the different areas of the grounds.

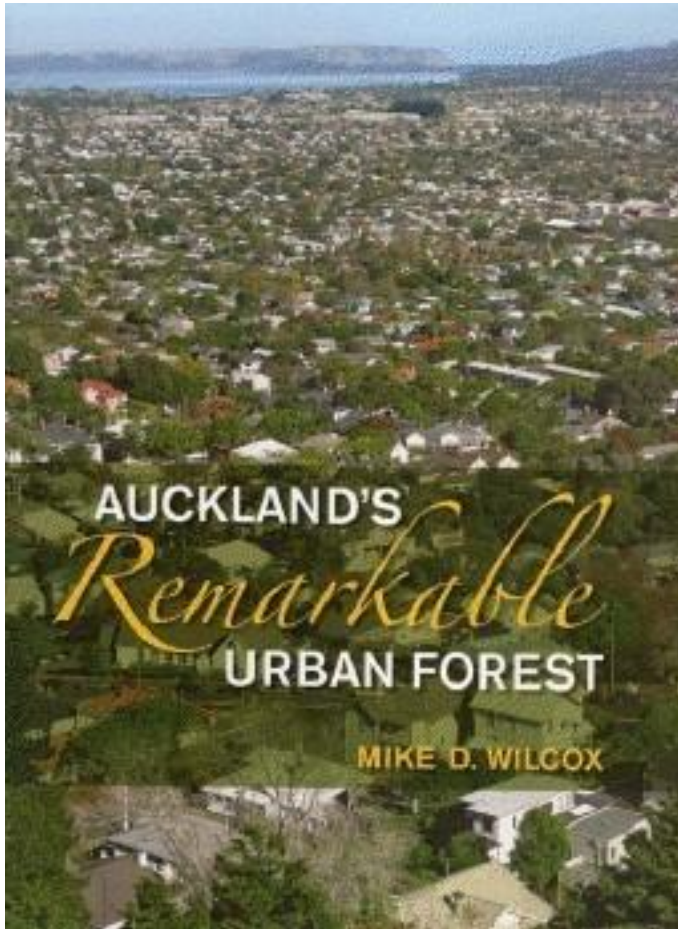


Plate 34

Rubus parvus Buchan. (creeping lawyer)

Emily Harris

From: <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/etexts/SamEarl>



2. Book Review 'Auckland's Remarkable Urban Forest' by Mike Wilcox

This stunning book was released quite recently as part of the 75th celebrations of the Auckland Botanical Society. The publication aims to describe the region's urban forest which the author defines as: "the trees within a city, in parks, gardens, streets, schools, in groups or dense stands or of natural occurrence, both native and naturalised."

After years of research, foot-slog, and photography in 4,200 public parks and reserves, Mike Wilcox has produced a very comprehensive account of trees and forests in Auckland. Areas covered in depth include:

- Public native bush reserves
- Native re-vegetation projects undertaken by community groups
- Exotic woodlands

- Street trees
- Trees of suburban home gardens
- Flowering trees
- Tree health
- Utilisation and management of the urban forest

Possibly my favourite chapter is entitled 'Notable Trees.' To quote the author 'they are trees of exceptional size and/or age, or of an unusual species, or of historical or cultural significance'. His list of notable trees is extensive and provides addresses. It is well worth copying the list and keeping it in your car for when you are travelling around the city. His explanation as to why we cultivate trees from all around the world is also intriguing ... 'it's to do with the climate in Auckland; it's not too hot and not too cold, not too moist and not too dry...'

A wonderful tribute is paid to the many community groups that work to maintain and improve Auckland's urban forests 'They head out there in the weekends and get their hands dirty, planting trees along riverbanks, and regenerating areas with native trees.' I have found this to be an outstanding publication, the time and energy taken to produce this book is almost beyond belief. It is an absolute 'must' for all plant lovers.

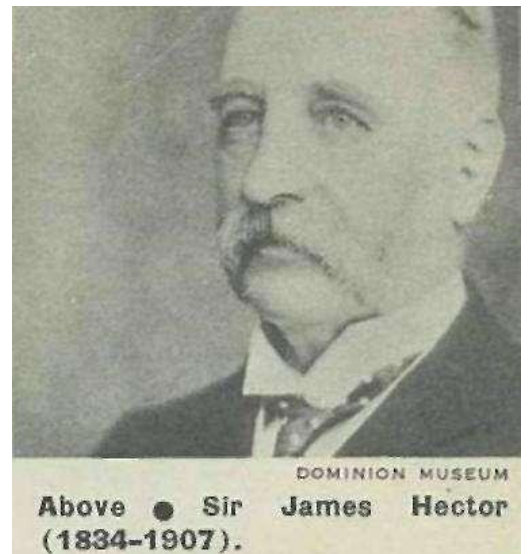
3. A Look Back in History: early scientist and botanist James Hector.

Born in Edinburgh on March 16th 1834, James Hector entered Edinburgh University in 1852. The only avenue available at the time for science students was as a medical student. Hector proved to be an exceptional student and managed to include botany and geology in his studies. Prior to graduation in 1856, he accepted a position as a geologist on the highly regarded Palliser Expedition surveying Canada for 3 years.

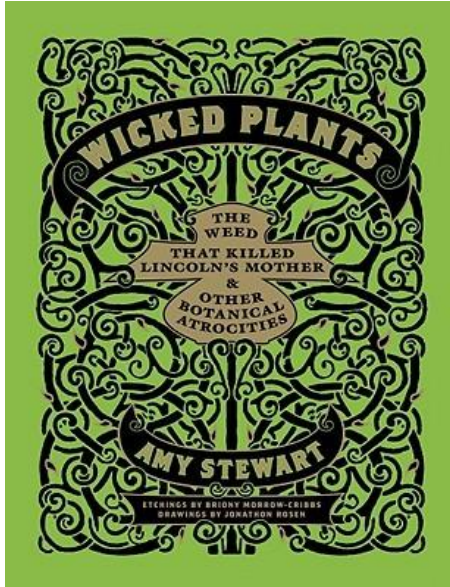
Upon return to Edinburgh, Hector successfully applied for a position as a geologist for the Otago Provincial Council. He spent the next three years undertaking a comprehensive survey of Otago and Southland. Aably assisted by the noted botanist John Buchanan, they collected a vast array of rocks, minerals, fossils, and of course - plants. With the discovery of gold in Otago, the New Zealand government saw the need for a comprehensive geological survey of the entire country. Hector was summoned to Wellington and appointed the Funding Director of the New Zealand Geological Survey. Until his retirement at the age of 69, James Hector had substantial influence in the direction of New Zealand science. He was Head of the Colonial Museum for 38 years, managed the Geological Survey, and New Zealand Institute for over 30 years. During tenure as the senior advisor to the government on scientific matters, he was awarded a knighthood in 1886. He died in 1907 leaving a legacy of a considerable number of plants named after him: *Aciphylla hectorii*, *Brachyglottis hectorii*, *Carex hectorii*, *Olearia hectorii*, *Prasophyllum hectorii*, *Raoulia hectorii*. The endangered Hector's dolphin was also named after him.



Raoulia hectorii Photograph with kind permission from Mike Thorsen photographer nzpcn.org.nz



4.



Wicked Plants: The weed that killed Lincoln's mother, and other botanical atrocities - by Amy Stewart.

For booklovers such as me, who trawl second hand bookshops and libraries, every now and again you come across a gem. In this instance the book was found tucked away in the shelves of the Unitec library. Author Amy Stewart has her own 'poison garden' and on introduction warns us to 'beware the sordid lives of plants behaving badly...a tree that shed poison daggers, a glistening red seed that stops the heart, a

shrub that causes paralysis, a vine that strangles'. Despite the ghoulish prose, the book comprehensively covers over two hundred of nature's most appalling creations, all of which, in some manner, intend to kill, maim, intoxicate, or offend.

As the author states 'drawing upon history, medicine, science, and legend, this compendium of bloodcurdling botany will entertain enlighten and alarm even the most intrepid gardeners and nature lovers.'



Urtica ferox
Kind permission
John Barkla photographer
nzpcn.org.nz

Even New Zealand receives a mention, *Urtica ferox*, the native tree nettle or ongaonga, is listed as New Zealand's most painful plant. The rashes, blisters, and intensive stings can last several days. Other plants of relevance to the New Zealand gardener include: the castor oil plant, *oleander*, opium poppy, sago palm, tobacco, and yew. The final paragraph of this intriguing book sums it up. 'I confess, I am enchanted by the plant kingdom's criminal element, I love a good villain!'

5. A look at our native *Gunnera*

As New Zealand home properties get smaller, plant lovers tend to squeeze as many different plants as possible into the garden area. One very easy way to achieve diversity is to include our many ground covers underneath or between existing shrubs. Not only does this add interest but it is also effective in suppressing weeds.

The genus *Gunnera* is named after a Norwegian bishop, Johan Ernst Gunnerus he encouraged plant collectors to send him specimens from the 'New World'.

Gunneras are ancient plants native to South America, South Africa, Madagascar, Tasmania and New Zealand. They are plants of the supercontinent Gondwana which began to break apart in the Jurassic period. With the land mass separating, *Gunnera* were scattered across the southern hemisphere and developed in isolation. Hence the variation between the giant *Gunnera* of Chile with leaves of up to two metres, and our own small native ground covering species. New Zealand *Gunnera* includes:

Gunnera densiflora A South Island species found in Nelson, Marlborough, and part of Canterbury in low alpine to montane altitudes of 600-1200m. It grows naturally in damp grasslands and bogs. It displays a dark green heart-shaped leaf.

Gunnera dentata. Found in both islands, again preferring the damp area including bogs and stream banks. It is therefore found more in the south of the North Island and less common in the drier areas of the South Island. It also has small heart-shaped leaves but with dentate leaf margins.

Gunnera monoica. This is the most common species and is found in a variety of New Zealand habitats. It forms a dense mat of thick dark green leaves.

Gunnera hamiltonii. By contrast this highly endangered species is only found over a limited number of sites on Stewart Island and Invercargill. The brownish green leaves are the largest in size of the New Zealand *Gunnera*, and press flat to the ground.

Gunnera prorepens. Found in lowland and sub-alpine locations from Waikato southwards. This variety generally prefers permanently wet habitats. The leaves are bronze-green to purplish-green. Bright red fruit appear on the female plants in summer.



Gunnera densiflora
With Kind permission
Photographer: Peter De Lange
<http://www.nzpcn.org.nz>



Gunnera Monoica
kind permission Photographer:
Jeremy Rolf
<http://www.nzpcn.org.nz>



Gunnera prorepens
Kind permission
Photographer: Hamish Deans
<http://www.nzpcn.org.nz>

Possibly the most comprehensive collection of *Gunnera* are not at Fernglen, but, amazingly, on the other side of the world. Niwa Green's Heritage National Plant Collection, in Norfolk, England, has a complete collection of New Zealand *Gunnera*. They grow alongside enormous Chilean *Gunnera*.

Here at Fernglen look for the *Gunnera prorepens* and *Gunnera monoica* thriving on the pathways near the entrance gates.



Chilean *Gunnera* (free use from Wikipedia)

6. Winstone's Garden Centre new and noteworthy plant list from 1980.

In 1980 as a young nurseryman already 'nuts' about plants, I wrote the list which is now scanned and attached as a part of this newsletter. Thirty three years later some points that are worthy of interest in terms of history and fashion include:

1. There are a number of native plants on the list with variegated leaves. This occurred early in the widespread introduction of these plants to New Zealand horticulture and became popular and fashionable with home gardeners.
2. Coloured native cultivars were being introduced such as: *Lophomyrtus*, *Phormiums*, *Pseudopanax* species.
3. A one-off listing of the *Todea superba* (*Leptopteris superba*) or 'Prince of Wales Fern'. This rare and magnificent fern was supplied by a grower from the west coast of the South Island. The grower appeared from nowhere and vanished just as quickly!



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May 1980

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY PLANTS

Not all these plants are in stock at any one time, but orders may be placed for delivery as available.

When prices are required, mark the list with items and we will return list with current prices and estimate of freight.

NATIVE PLANTS:

- Arthropodium candidum Bronze Form - a small edition of the Reinga Lily, only 15cm. high. Sprays of tiny white flowers, bronze leaves. A good rock plant.
- Astelia chathamica Silver Spear - 1m. The handsome silvery leaves have a metallic sheen. Orange berries follow the flowers. Enjoys damp and peat.
- Blechnum penna-marina - hardy low alpine fern suitable for sun or shade, with creeping rhizomes. A good rock plant and ground cover.
- Clianthus p. White Heron - a selected form of the rare white Kaka Beak. Pendulous pea-shaped flowers in Spring. If possible, plant on a raised site for effect.
- Coprosma kirkii variegata - new cultivar with striking white and green foliage; less vigorous than the green form, therefore makes good ground cover.
- Corynocarpus l. albus variegatus - this variegated Karaka has typical foliage margined with white. A handsome shrub to 3.5m.
- Fuchsia excorticata purpurea - select purple-leaved form. Bush to 2m or 3m. Flowers freely and has loose papery bark; deciduous.
- Fuchsia procumbens - prostrate growth with round green foliage. Small flowers followed by red drupes in Autumn.
- Griselinia lucida - very large bright green foliage, glossy leaves. Requires good drainage.
- Gunnera pro-repens - E. 8cm. round leaves, bronze in Winter; red berries.
- Lophomyrtus Kathryn - purple-brown crinkled leaves are very effective on a bushy shrub growing to 2.5m.
- L. Sundae - rounded leaves with gold variegation and red splashes. 1.5m.
- L. variegata - the crinkled leaves are creamy-yellow and green. 2m.
- Marattia salicina - King Fern. 2m. Strong shining dark green fronds for damp shade or waterside. Large fronds. We have 30 other native ferns.
- Metrosideros carminea - adult form. Grown from cuttings; crimson flowers when young in September. Rounded bush 60cm x 90cm.
- Metrosideros robusta (North Island Rata) - deep scarlet flowers. 3.5m.
- M. excelsa aurea - the yellow-flowered Pohutakawa with sulphur yellow flowers in summer.
- M. excelsa Sunglow - NEW 1980 golden variegated foliage.
- M. Kerm. Red and Gold - deep green leaves margined with yellow, stand out against the red stems of the branchlets.
- M. Kerm. Lewis Nichol - broad foliage margined with gold and a halo of orange on young growth.
- Nertera depressa - excellent ground cover for damp shade. Dark red berries follow white flowers.
- Olearia heesmanni - A.G.E. Bushy to 150cm; masses of white starry flowers.

2.

- Parahebe Baby Blue - 15cm. A selection with the dainty blue flowers of *P. lyalli*.
- Phormium tenax Black Prince - magnificent dark-leaved form with large purple-black foliage grown from divisions. 2m.
- P. tenax Dazzler - like *P. rubrum* for size. The purple foliage is striped with crimson. A beautiful flax.
- P. tenax Goldspike - compact growth; foliage broadly margined with gold; erect and striking.
- P. c. Yellow Wave - outstanding yellow foliated flax of medium size; pendulous foliage makes a graceful plant.
- P. t. Sundowner - grey-green foliage striped with pink, the young foliage being especially attractive. 2m.
- P. t. Thumbelina - a miniature form with very narrow bronzy-purple foliage, ideal for rockeries and pebble gardens.
- Pittosporum crassifolium variegatum - Karo. 3m. Silvery and white variegated foliage; very wind hardy. A very beautiful plant.
- Pittosporum ralphii variegatum - a rare and hardy variety with long green and cream leaves; will succeed in shade or grow on coast.
- Pittosporum Debra - new from the Hunua ranges. The small leaves are variegated with cream and pink. Shade.
- Pittosporum ten. Stirling Gold - a newcomer to the small-leaved group with tiny foliage splashed with yellow.
- P. ten. Silversheen - small very dainty silvery leaves; superceding James Stirling.
- P. ten. Tom Thumb - new dwarf bushy plant with shiny purple foliage.
- Pomaderris kumerahou (Golden Tainui) - golden yellow flowers in Sept./Oct. Grows well on any soil including clay banks.
- Pseudopanax Goldsplash - a fine new foliage shrub for garden or tub. A five-finger splashed with yellow.
- Pseudopanax Black Jack - basically a green 'five finger' with a black sheen; the leaves go almost entirely black in winter.
- Raoulia hookeri - sparkling silvery grey mat.
- Sophora tet. Chevalier - selected form; free flowering yellow Kowhai. Usual height 3-4m.
- Todia superba (The Prince of Wales Feathers) - occasionally available. This rare fern does require special conditions.
- Uncinia egmontiana - a lovely grass with rich purple foliage; ideal rock garden plant. The foliage is evergreen.
- Xeronema callistemon - 60cm. A rare flax-like plant found on Poor Knights; flowers resemble red bottlebrushes. Requires sun, sharp drainage and no frost.