

Twelve or so Bot Soccers met at Chuck and Carol Landis's garden on the Warrington-Seacliff coast road on this spring Saturday. Our hosts had very thoughtfully prepared a list of native species wild and cultivated on their property including an introduction to their collections of native and exotic plants: they wrote "When we bought the home (formerly the James Powell Convalescent Home) in 1975, there were just ill-defined lawns and calves gazing right up to the house. Somehow our enthusiasm got the better of us and during the 1990's we started extending the garden into the paddocks." They guided us around their Rhododendron Dell which was beautifully sheltered by 6 m tall *Cupressus macrocarpa* hedges. Ornamental shrubs such as *Edgeworthia gardneri* from China with its sweetly fragrant yellow flowers and the evergreen, *Illicium anisatum* from Japan and Taiwan, with many-petalled white flowers, and climbers such as China's *Clematis armandii* with its large white flowers and handsome, leathery evergreen foliage, featured in this woodland area and around the gazebo.

Among the *Rhododendron* species and hybrids was one *R. maddenii* type, which had ventured one early and very fragrant bloom. Adjacent were geographical collections from Nepal (*Rhododendron campanulatum* and *R. barbatum*, *Daphne bholua*, *Lyonia*), China/Japan (*Michelia yunnanense*, *Betula albosinensis*, *Sophora japonica*, etc), and North America (*Halesia carolina*, *Sassafras albidum*, *Malus ioensis*, *Machura pomifera* and *Rhododendron catawbiense*), as well as a selection of *Rhododendron* and *Magnolia* hybrids raised by the late Felix Jury, the renowned plant breeder of New Plymouth. Also seen were some Aussies: the Tasmanian rainforest shrub, *Anopterus glandulosus*, which although commonly called "native laurel" in Tasmania, is in fact a member of the *Escallonia* family with cousins in South America. Also flowering was the waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*), the showy, red proteaceous floral emblem of New South Wales.

In the forest remnant the Landis's have named Captain Hankey's Bush (after an early Warrington settler), mature kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*), perhaps 100 years old overtopped the understorey of mahoe, lemonwood, broadleaf, fuchsia, marbleleaf and mapou. Chuck and Carol noted that immediately after removing stock several species of hitherto unseen natives appeared, including poataniwha (*Melicope simplex*) and katote or soft tree fern (*Cyathea smithii*). They also noted how well many native seedlings fared after grass competition was removed by spraying Roundup™, and Chuck observed that "spraying the grass appears to be the only way to obtain bush regeneration in old pasture land." They have replanted mostly with plants sourced locally ie "in coastal Otago between Akatore and Herbert." But elsewhere in the garden they have established wonderful collections of non-local pittosporums (at least six species), the rare *Pennantia baylisiana* from the Three Kings Is., *Ixerba brexioides* with and without broadleaf (*Griselinia littoralis*) companions (more on this in Chuck's article elsewhere in this newsletter) and many others found well to the north, such as tawa, titoki, kohekohe, toro, makamaka, rewarewa, kawakawa, kaiwhiri, whau and karaka. It was a treat to find a puriri (*Vitex lucens*), New Zealand's only member of the teak family, Verbenaceae, with much vigorous young growth and toropapa (*Alseuosmia macrophylla*), which occurs from North Cape to Marlborough and North Westland,

thriving and sporting numerous buds that would soon open into fragrant, tubular red flowers.

Lovers of moist feet, kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*), maire (*Syzygium maire*, formerly *Eugenia maire*), bog pine (*Halocarpus bidwillii*) and a knee-less pukatea (*Laurelia novae-zelandiae*) were very much at home in a damp streamside site. Nearby, a metal Kermit the Frog positioned in a small pond, entertained the youngest visitor. A dragon with a most soulful expression stood guard nearby.

Thank you Chuck and Carol for sharing your enthusiasm and vision for your eclectic plant collections with us.

Truby King Reserve

Allison Knight

From Chuck and Carol's fragrant gardens we drove up the hill to another Enchanted Forest, at the nearby Seacliff Reserve, site of the former Seacliff Mental Hospital. Here Chuck showed us a collection of magnificent mature trees, exotic and native, that were planted during Sir Truby King's reign as superintendent from 1889 – 1920. The palatial, Lawson-designed hospital buildings were unfortunately built on geologically unstable ground. They were built first in brick, then in wood, and when that too succumbed to the slumping the hospital was abandoned in 1973 and the spacious grounds overlooking the sea fell into disrepair. Now the plantings are slowly being rescued from the wilderness by the combined forces of the Truby King Recreation Reserve Committee and the DCC, with the help of Task force Green and Horticulture students from the Polytech.

The highlight for me was coming round a corner and seeing in full bloom the magnolia that Janet Frame had written about in *Faces in the Water*. Only recently it was rescued from being almost totally overgrown. In her book Janet vividly describes the excitement of going for a walk in the grounds and seeing "the magnolia tree (the pride of the hospital) in bloom".

Chuck generously provided notes on the history of the hospital, a map showing the tracks and the most significant large trees, as well as species lists of exotic shrubs and small trees and native trees, shrubs and climbers. These lists are filed in the Otago Herbarium. Chuck is still adding to this list as more species come into flower and fruit, and would welcome further observations.

So do contact him if you're going there – it's well worth a visit!

Carmichaelia williamsii
(Giant flowered broom), in full flower this late September trip.
Conservation Requirements of New Zealand's Nationally Threatened Vascular Plants. DoC 1999

