

# SUBTROPICALS

Spring 2003





# Weekend Gardener

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# SUBTROPICALS

is a forum for the exchange of ideas and information on the identification, growth requirements and sourcing of native and exotic subtropical plants (and tropicals) suitable for gardens in the milder parts of New Zealand.

SPRING 2003

Volume 2 Number 3

## CONTENTS

- 5 Banana cultivars  
6 Front cover story - foliage vrieseas  
10 *Parajubaea torallyi*  
11 Don't believe everything you read!  
12 New orchid society  
15 Plants and computers  
16 *Psoralea pinnata*, *Bocconia species*  
19 *Burchellia bubalina*, *Sparmannia africana*  
21 Epiphytes and their host trees  
24 Book review  
25 Davidson's plum  
26 *Dendrobium nobile*  
*Begonia haageana*  
28 *Nopalxochia phyllanthoides*  
*Asplenium australasicum*  
33 In a Mediterranean mood  
*Cordyline kaspar*, *Paramongaia weberbaueri*, *Echeveria*,  
*Aloe capitata*, *Aloe ciliaris*  
39 Plant sources  
40 Conference & Show - 2003  
41 *Cantua pyrifolia*  
**SUBTROPICALS** website  
42 Back cover story - *Montanoa bipinnatifida*

**SUMMER ISSUE**

**COPY DEADLINE**

**All copy must be received by the 31<sup>ST</sup> October 2003**

## Success!

When television commentators start to take the mickey:

...among the garden artistry and other assorted pomposity, some garden designer decided that the world's ugliest suburban house needed Auckland's biggest backyard cliché, the subtropical garden.

In went the bromeliads, the bluestone pavers and the rocks (to a soundtrack – gee how quirky – of Queen's *We will rock you*) and out went blooming originality...

you know the public has caught up and you can now join those other gardening clichés – the English country garden, the cottage garden and the desert look.

Success however, was what we achieved with the first conference and show to be held by the Society.

Although the Freemans Bay Hall was fine for the conference day, it proved to be already too small for the Sunday sale.

Despite the dreadful weather, the public turned out in a buying mood and some even arrived early enough to queue in the rain!

So the Conference & Show 2004 will be held on the last weekend in June (roughly midwinter) at the ASB Stadium in Kohimaramara, together with an exhibition of outdoor sculpture.

More information on the events, past and future, is included on page 40 of this issue. Ideas on how we can keep improving the Society's annual weekend are keenly sought.

**Marjorie Lowe**  
**Editor**

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# **BANANA CULTIVARS**

## **Robin Booth**

I have been questioned as to which is the best cultivar of banana to grow in Northland. My thoughts and observations are that our Northland climate is borderline for growing bananas and, if we have a cold, wet winter (like this year), plants can get knocked back. However, it is surprising how quickly they bounce back as the summer temperatures rise.

The late Dr. Phil Gardner, who lived up the Waikare Inlet, has probably done the most evaluation on a wide range of cultivars. Over twelve years, he collected together thirty-three local and imported clones of known, named varieties and tested them at his former property in Waikare. According to Phil, the Ladyfinger type (short, stubby fruit with a thin skin) gave the best results. Hamoa and Australian Ladyfinger were two he regarded highly. My own observations are that there are several Ladyfinger banana cultivars around, which have differing flavours, but most people don't know their names. If possible, try a fruit to see if you like that particular flavour and then get a young sucker from that plant to try.

Cavendish are generally dwarf growing but they are very 'cold/wet' sensitive and very few places can get them to fruit well. They usually exhibit splotched brown markings on the younger leaves, which disappear as the 'palm' matures.

Bananas respond particularly well to heavy mulching, producing strong palms with big bunches. The best I have seen weighed nearly thirty kilograms.

They strongly resent having wet 'feet' in the winter-time, but they do like lots of water in the summer, so make sure they are planted in a free draining area and in as warm a situation as possible, that is preferably protected from the wind.

Now get to it and grow yourself a bunch!

The opinions expressed in letters or articles in this magazine are the authors' own views and do not necessarily express the policy of the Subtropicals Society.

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# FRONT COVER STORY

## FOLIAGE VRIESEAS

Marjorie Lowe

It is appropriate that *Vriesea hieroglyphica* - King of the bromeliads - should be featured on our front cover. But the two plants shown are mere babies. A mature *V. hieroglyphica* can grow, fairly slowly, to a mature spread of about 1.5 metres, with an inflorescence as tall.

Grown for its shiny bright green leaves that have striking, transverse irregular bands of darker green, sometimes almost black, on both sides of the leaves, flowering foreshadows the completion of its life cycle. Fortunately, this can take from five to ten years, mostly depending on growing conditions.

When the going is hard, most plants in nature react by setting seed and/or increasing vegetatively in order to survive, thereby shortening the individual's life. If conditions are to their liking, the reproduction cycle seems to be delayed so it makes good sense when growing foliage plants to ensure that growing conditions are as ideal as possible.

Frost tender *V. hieroglyphica*, like many of the night flowering, patterned-leaf vrieseas, comes from southern Brazil and grows epiphytically in rainforests in shady and humid conditions. It will stand fairly high light, some sun through winter deciduous trees and even a little morning sun, but is essentially a shade lover. In its native habitat, it grows on the lower branches of trees, rarely more than six metres above the ground.

Once a fairly rare plant, it is now produced in large quantities. A word of warning - many of the growers are producing lush-looking plants that have been forced under heat and over fed. As a houseplant this is usually not a problem but, if you are buying for garden use, it pays to seek out a grower whose stock is properly hardened off. This applies to all bromeliads and a little time spent checking on how the plants are grown can avoid later disappointment.

As a contrast with the shade lovers, *V. philippocoburgii* growing in full sun, makes a different statement. In this case, the foliage is a plain, sharp green with bold henna (occasionally black) coloured tips to the leaves. The colour appears to have been painted on in broad, uneven brush strokes. Another epiphyte from southern Brazil, it grows in and on the tops of trees in full sun.

The parent plant in the photograph overleaf, was 1-2 years old when

pushed into a crevice in an old tree fern stump. Three years later, it has produced three pups with another two just starting to show. Now an attractive clump, the older, outer leaves eventually turn gold-green and hang down. *V. philippocoburgii* looks best when grown as an epiphyte or raised well above ground level. When it flowers, it sends up a 1.5 metre spike covered in bright red bracts. The branched inflorescence has yellow flowers, which open over a long period – the spike looks good for six months.

*V. platynema*, an epiphyte, comes from the West Indies, Trinidad, Venezuela and the restinga areas near the coast in Brazil. However, *V. platynema variegata*, a more striking plant, is the one more commonly grown here.

A fairly large plant, about 80cm across when grown as a single specimen, it has young, inner leaves that are upright. In addition to the longitudinal lines of cream and bluish green, the leaf tips are flushed with a strong red-purple, which carries over to the top of the underside of the leaf. As the leaves age, they lose this colour and the cream stripes almost disappear as well. The flower spike is more interesting than colourful but at a metre high is quite striking. This form seems to flower earlier, at about three years, than some of the other foliage vrieseas.

The deep red colour of the heavily marked leaves has made *V. fosteriana rubra* a very popular plant. It is often confused (or mis-named) with its well-known cultivar, *Vriesea fosteriana* 'Red Chestnut'. A reasonably large plant up to a metre across when mature, it has an unusual night blooming inflorescence, characterised by heavily mottled calyces enclosing the yellow flowers.

Again from southern Brazil, it grows usually on sandy hillsides in bright sunlight at 1000 metres. It was featured on the cover of our first issue, growing terrestrially in nearly full sun. While recommendations are usually for humid shade, this is quite an adaptable plant.

*V. fosteriana* has been used a great deal, along with *V. platynema* and other foliage vrieseas, in the intensive hybridising programmes that are being carried out with these plants. So often, the differences between some of the new cultivars are so miniscule that it hardly seems worthwhile naming them. *V. fosteriana* 'Red Chestnut' has stood the test of time and is justifiably popular still. For the others, only time will tell which ones will survive.

The resultant cross from *Vriesea fosteriana* 'Red Chestnut' x *Vriesea gigantea*, (photo overleaf) is typical of the work being done. Attractive, but no more so than some of the species and varieties.

Other interesting species, some reasonably easily available, others requiring more time and effort to track down:

*V. bituminosa* – blue-green leaves, the rounded tips are marked with dark red blotches. The undersides of the leaves are tinged brown and in high light the plant can be flushed pink. Reportedly found as a terrestrial in swampy ground and as an epiphyte in forests.

*V. fenestralis* – known as the ‘pretty vriesea’, It comes from southern Brazil and grows in the forests from sea level to about 1800 metres. The fairly small rosette has pale inner leaves with dominant longitudinal lines. The older leaves have deeper green horizontal markings and the undersides of the leaves have purplish circles. Shady conditions.

*V. gigantea* - a large rosette with blue-green leaves blotched both sides with yellow/green patterning. Currently it is easily available and used in hybridising. Grows naturally in sand on coastal fringes. Sun tolerant.

*V. saundersii* – another small plant that needs to be grown at eye level to show off the deep purple-red spots on the undersides of the leaves. It grows on rocks as well as in trees and has an attractive pale yellow branched flower scape. Probably frost tender.

Many vrieseas are said to be surprisingly hardy.

To -7°C – *bituminosa* x *saundersii*, *gigantea*, *philippocoburgii*, *platynema*.

To -2/3°C – *bituminosa*, *fenestralis*, *fosteriana* ‘Red Chestnut’, *hieroglyphica*

● Lush planting in Peter Brady’s garden accentuates the unexpectedness of the fun ceramic sculpture featured on the front cover. Sculpture often adds another dimension to one’s enjoyment.

---

**Front cover:**

**Photo: Grant Bayley**

**Opposite: clockwise from top left –**

**The rather exotic inflorescence of *Vriesea fosteriana* rubra and top right, the plant before flowering, planted here amongst other bromeliads in a large, old crucible.**

**Next, a hybrid, *Vriesea fosteriana* ‘Red Chestnut’ x *Vriesea gigantea*, with below - *V. platynema* variegata**

**Photo: Brian Chudleigh**

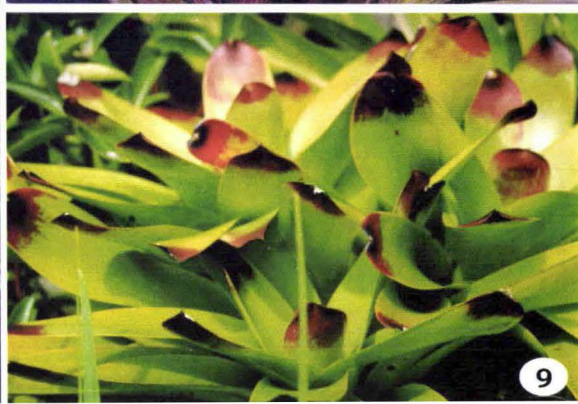
**Bottom right –**

***Vriesea philippocoburgii* photographed just as the sun came out. The bright green lower leaves are a better indication of the plant colour when grown in full sun. These leaves are tipped in a strong henna colour that appears to have been put on with a paintbrush.**

**Bottom left:**

**The flowering stem of *V. philippocoburgii* is very striking and lasts in colour for about six months.**







# *Parajubaea torallyi*

**Dick Endt**

The Cumbe, otherwise known in New Zealand as the Mountain Coconut from Ecuador, is not the only species of the genus *Parajubaea*. There are several other species which only occur in Bolivia and nowhere else.

In recent times, seeds of a Bolivian *parajubaea* have been introduced to New Zealand in quantity. The palm featured in the photograph opposite is *Parajubaea torallyi*, seen growing at Landsend.

Planted in 1996 as a small seedling, by 2002 it was more than four metres high, one of the fastest growing palms in New Zealand. In many ways it is similar to *Parajubaea cocoides*, but it has a more upright growth habit, grows faster and is likely to be more frost hardy than the Ecuadorian palm. It produces large, thick-shelled nuts, often containing three kernels, each one capable of germination.

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## **DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ**

**Jonathan Voysey**

Sometime in autumn, a local garden column (writer not local) was giving some advice on pruning and grooming. To my surprise, the writer suggested cutting cannas down to the ground. This may be suitable advice for gardeners in those areas where the frost cuts them down. There the burnt foliage needs clearing away, leaving a patch of bare ground for the winter.

For those living in frost-free areas his remarks were heresy. Not only would one lose the handsome foliage, but all the late autumn, winter and early spring flowerspikes (photo page 43). Admittedly, some varieties have only the occasional flower head during this period and others none at all.

Nevertheless, grooming the plants by removing spent stems and new growths with no growing tips, not only removes snail and slug hiding places but ensures that there are no empty spaces in the garden.

Then there are cannas like Yellow Humbert, shown in leaf and flower on page two. Despite it being a colder winter this year, this canna has flowered all the way through, continually sending up new flower stems, and is still doing so. If you want all new leaf growth for this summer, cut your cannas back in **spring** after the new growths have made their appearance. Like hydrangeas, you will have removed the earliest flowers.

# **A PROPOSED ELECTRONIC ORCHID MAGAZINE FOR NEW ZEALAND**

At one time we (Nick and Elizabeth Miller), used to edit 'Orchids in New Zealand', the national magazine for orchid enthusiasts. Since the demise of 'Orchids in New Zealand', we have felt that the hobby of growing orchids has been suffering from the lack of a regular, frequently published periodical. A printed magazine does not appear to be economically viable. However, one distributed electronically is much more practical.

We are preparing to launch a new orchid magazine, to be distributed exclusively by email. The title of the magazine has been provisionally chosen, but has yet to be finalised. We hope that the advent of this magazine will assist in reviving the orchid growing hobby, which has been showing some encouraging signs of recovery in the last year or two.

The rapid spread of computers and email to many households in New Zealand has enabled such a proposal to be considered. The magazine would be distributed as a pdf file (Acrobat). The Acrobat reader software may be obtained free of charge from a variety of sources.

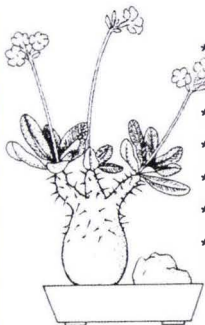
We propose to publish every three months, with a very modest subscription charge. Advertising will also be available at extremely reasonable rates. Classified advertising and Society notices will be published free of charge.

We also propose a reasonably heavy emphasis on practical orchid culture. However, interesting new trends in hybridising, general observations and news of significant events in the orchid world are also very welcome. In addition, we hope to have regular features on orchids as garden plants, and on other plants to grow with your orchids.

Obviously, such a magazine will need writers, and hopefully some of you will take up the challenge. We also need subscribers. We do hope that you can assist in returning a magazine to what used to be one of the world's foremost orchid-growing communities.

If you are interested in subscribing or writing, please communicate with us at the address shown below, either by email (preferred) or other means.

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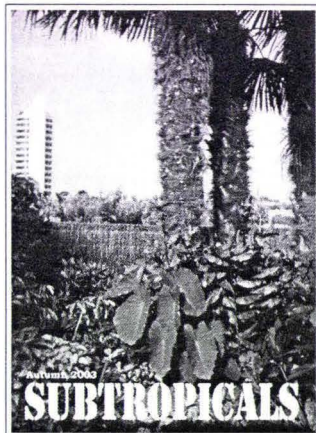


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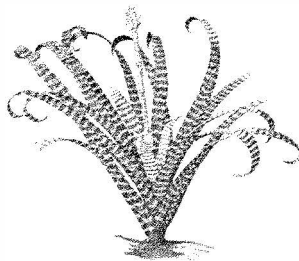
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## SHOW FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

On the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> October, the New Zealand Clivia Club will hold New Zealand's second Clivia Show at the Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens. The club is anxious to explore new ways of displaying plants and developing formats for flower shows that are appropriate to the twenty-first century.

This year the NZCC is privileged to be able to combine with six of Auckland's leading ceramic artists to explore new ideas for displaying our plants to best advantage. Each contributing artist has a quite different approach to his art and this will mirror the diversity of the *Clivia*.

To foster maximum involvement, every visitor will be encouraged to vote for the plant they like best. As most people are newcomers to *Clivia*, informal workshops have been organized so that visitors can have their questions answered. Newcomers are especially encouraged to bring at least one plant for display.

Background information will be clearly displayed with each plant and *Clivia* blooms and berries will be used in various floral arrangements. Photographs will also be displayed. Sales stalls will enable you to purchase plants and ceramics of various types.

**Keith Hammett**

### AUCKLAND REGIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS

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**Information – (09) 267-1457**

## Plants and computers

If you have a computer and are connected to the Internet, the plant information world is at your fingertips! I find that looking up a plant name is a sure way of losing a lot of time as, once you start, you get channelled into all sorts of different thoughts and ideas. If you haven't done it before, it is pretty straightforward. Once you are connected to the net, go to your favourite search engine (I often use Alta Vista), then type in the scientific name of the plant you wish to find out about, enclose with inverted commas (e.g. "Heliconia subulata"), then hit Search and wait a few moments. Today, this gave five references, most with colour pictures. Putting in "Pittosporum tenuifolium" gave 84 sites. Note that the ones that are listed first usually hold the most information. One of the main points to watch is that these references are not necessarily scientific but what an individual puts up and thinks is right. If it is a university/scientific site it should be correct – compare sites and use common sense and come to your own conclusion. Now all you need is many free hours!

**Robin Booth**

## ***Psoralea pinnata***

## **Blue Pea Bush**

Also known as the African Scurf-pea, this South African, tree-like shrub is 2-4m in height but can be very rangy if not pruned regularly. The attractive and fragrant flowers shade from white, to blue to deep mauve and smother the plant through spring with a blue haze.

The evergreen, soft needle leaves, which are a rich dark green, give this psoralea a pine-like look, appropriate for a coastal or Mediterranean setting. In its native habitat, it frequently grows in moist (especially winter) partial-shade, which protects it from all but heavy frosts. Here it grows well in full sun and will stand most coastal conditions.

One drawback to *P. pinnata* is that, if the growing conditions are suitable, it will self-seed.

---

## ***Bocconia* species**

## **Rosemary Steele**

This genus from subtropical and tropical America has nine species. I have been unable to positively identify this stunning member of the poppy family (Papaveraceae) that we are growing, but it may well be *B. arborea*. Like *Montanoa*, it has beautiful leaves, deeply divided and up to 60cm. long, though paler green with dense grey felting underneath and golden-brown midribs. From late autumn through winter, large terminal heads of flowers appear. Unlike most members of the family, the individual flowers are insignificant, consisting of an ovary surrounded by a drooping cluster of stamens that wave like tiny tassels in the breeze. Fortunately there are hundreds of flowers per head, and the overall effect is golden. Later, each ovary ripens a single black seed, and the ovary walls fall away leaving the seeds hanging, surrounded by a red aril.

If cut, the plants release yellow latex which has been used as a dye by native peoples and is now being investigated for its anti-microbial properties. This genus is related to the perennial *Macleaya cordata* (formerly *B. cordata*) from Japan and E. China. Described as tolerant of light frosts, *Bocconia* grow best in full sun, in free draining, reasonably fertile soil. According to Botanica's 'Trees and Shrubs', they sucker when mature but, as yet, ours shows no signs of doing so.

---

### **Photos:**

**Top - *Psoralea pinnata***

**Bottom -**

***Bocconia frutescens* - the Tree Celandine from the West Indies and Mexico. This species was photographed in spring last year at Kerikeri with the large inflorescence in jade-coloured seed.**







## ***Burchellia bubalina***

## **Wild Pomegranate Buffalo Horn**

The only species in its genus, *B. bubalina* is found in the forests of the east coast of South Africa, from the Cape through Natal to the northern Transvaal. It grows there in partial or almost complete shade.

However, in New Zealand, it will stand some sun. Although said to be slow growing (to about 2 to 3m), it has the advantage of starting to flower when only about 50cm high. The photograph opposite is a cheat. The plant, already in flower and fresh from the nursery, was placed (still in its black plastic bag) amongst garden plants to give it that 'established' look.

The older leaves are dark green, shiny and slightly wavy on the edges. When in flower, this is a most attractive plant. The tube flowers are orange with contrasting yellow stamens, held in small clusters at the ends of the branches during spring and intermittently in summer.

*B. bubalina* will stand light frosts and, if grown in shade, will be protected by the canopy. Plenty of compost in the soil, preferably loamy, and moist, well-drained conditions will help to speed up growth.

---

## **WINTER COMPETITION WINNER**

**And the winner is Ian Shoosmith of Manganui.**

## ***Sparrmannia africana***

**(syn. *Sparmannia*)**

**'...is a fast growing shrub or small tree originating from South Africa and Madagascar. It has large, soft, tooth-edged leaves that are covered with soft hairs (it can be used as toilet paper if necessary).**

**The attractive white flowers have purple and gold stamens and hang in clusters all over the shrub. These resemble bumblebees, hence its common name is "The Bumblebee Tree", which kids love.**

**This semi-hardwood can be propagated from seed or cuttings and requires reasonable shelter from wind and full sun. It is fast growing and flowers most of the year'.**

*S. africana* is also known as 'African Linden', 'Cape Stock Rose' and 'Wild Hollyhock'.

*Ian's photograph opposite shows off the large attractive leaves. In its homeland it is spring flowering but in Ian's garden it is almost everblooming, out of flower only when regularly pruned.*

# **SPRING COMPETITION**

The purpose of the competitions is to encourage our members to participate in the magazine, either by writing articles, paragraphs and letters or by sending in photographs of plants or places of interest.

All our members love to read about what other gardeners are doing – whether it is successes or failures. We need to share the knowledge that often comes so hard-earned.

**Entries close on the 31<sup>st</sup> October**

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# EPHYPHYTES AND THEIR HOST TREES.

**Nick Miller**

Following an article by Marjorie Lowe on this subject (Vol.1, No.4), I have felt the impulse to contribute some more observations to the topic. We must realise that we are discussing the growing of plants on other plants (epiphyte means 'on plants'). There are many plants which are adapted to growing as epiphytes and most, but not all of them, come from warm climates.

Where I live, at Lake Rotoiti, many of the trees growing around the lake carry a load of epiphytes and they may be viewed easily and comfortably from a boat. It is noticeable that the tree most often laden with epiphytic plants is the pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*). This tree is usually a coastal species, but it occurs around some of the Rotorua Lakes and, I believe, Lake Taupo. Not all pohutukawas around Rotoiti support epiphytes in profusion. Some have only a few or (in the case of young trees) none at all. Often the first epiphyte to appear (other than lichens) is the native fern, *Pyrrosia serpens*. This plant is then followed by other ferns, lycopodiums, astelias and orchids. Particularly abundant epiphytes are the fern, *Asplenium flaccidum*, and the orchids, *Earina mucronata*, *E. autumnalis* and *Winika (syn. Dendrobium) cunninghamii*. Generally (but not always) the greatest growth of epiphytes occurs on the most horizontal branches.

*Winika cunninghamii* is particularly abundant around Rotoiti. It occurs in the usual form (white with a couple of dots of purple on the lobes of the labellum or lip), but an albino form with no colour is also common. There are a few plants with pink or purple stripes on the lip. This orchid seeds freely and sometimes hundreds of seedlings may be seen on an old pohutukawa. This species has the reputation of being very slow to grow and flower from a seedling.

Other trees that support epiphytes are *Metrosideros robusta* (northern rata) and its hybrids with the pohutukawa, *Weinmannia racemosa* (kamahi) and *Meliclytus ramiflorus* (mahoe). Old mahoe trees often host the small orchid, *Drymoanthus adversus*, which is a close relative of the popular Australian genus *Sarcochilus*. Sure enough, some sarcochilus hybrids, tied to an old mahoe here, have established well and flower.

A general observation is that trees that are good epiphyte hosts generally will accommodate a wide variety of epiphytes – ferns, orchids and others.

In Volume 1, No.3, I mentioned an article that I had read on host trees

for orchids. I have since retrieved this article from my archives: 'John Beckner - 'Host trees for cultivated orchids'. (*American Orchid Society Bulletin*, Vol.48 (8) pp 792-795, August 1979). The author is writing from a Florida perspective - i.e. generally warmer than northern New Zealand, but much more prone to occasional killing freezes. He makes the following interesting comments:

In the great majority of cases however, the orchids grow on a number of hosts, but not all that occur in the forest. In most of these cases, one or a few kinds of trees will have larger numbers and more vigorous individuals of the orchid. This is particularly obvious where the host tree is a *Eugenia* or any of the allied *Myrtaceae*. (*And guess which family the pohutukawa belongs to? - Myrtaceae. NM*).

The following list of trees is selected from species available in the nurseries or as wild trees here in Florida. Orchids grow on thousands of species of trees, but I am only concerned here with trees that are available in this area, can be kept small or in pots for a number of years and are known to me as good orchid hosts.

Probably all of the trees listed will air layer rather easily. Most will also root easily as cuttings under mist. Some, such as *Calliandra*, *Erythrina*, *Codiaeum*, *Acnistus*, *Tabebuia* and *Crescentia* will root without mist as large cuttings, even up to fence post size.

(Mr Beckner then lists a number of tree genera, sorted by family. This list has been slightly pruned to eliminate those that are unlikely to thrive in New Zealand. The references to particular orchid types associated with these trees have also been removed).

Annonaceae: - *Annona* spp. (cherimoyas etc.)

Apocynaceae: - *Plumeria* spp. (frangipani)

Bignoniaceae: - *Crescentia* spp., *Tabebuia* spp.

Coniferae: - *Cryptomeria japonica*, *Cupressus* spp., *Taxodium ascendens*.

Leguminosae: - *Acacia* spp., *Calliandra* spp., *Erythrina* spp.

Lythraceae: - *Lagerstroemia speciosa*

Malvaceae: - *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*, *H. schizopetalus* and hybrids

Moraceae: - *Ficus* spp.

Myrtaceae: - *Eugenia* spp., *Myrtus* spp., *Psidium guajava* (guava), *Syzigium* spp.

Rubiaceae: - *Coffea* spp. (coffee)

Rutaceae: - *Citrus* spp.

Solanaceae: - *Cestrum* spp.

Verbenaceae: - *Avicennia germinans* (mangrove), *Lantana* spp. and hybrids.

Many other good host trees grow too large for inclusion on this list such as some *Ficus* spp., *Magnolia grandiflora*, *Quercus virginiana* and several other *Quercus* (oaks). A number of orchids grow on palms...

The common epiphytic fern *Phlebodium (Polypodium) aureum* is very toxic to most other epiphytes. Sporelings of it often volunteer in *Cattleya* and *Vanda* pots here and cause the disintegration of the orchids if allowed to grow more than a few inches tall.

I have had similar experiences with this fern, which often comes up in pots in my greenhouse.

Gardeners should be aware that living tree ferns may sometimes overgrow epiphytes that have been established on them. We have had this occur with *Cyathea medullaris*, where the 'trunk' or caudex may grow outwards faster than the orchid does and the orchid (in this case *Earina mucronata*) gradually disappears beneath the surface.

Another tree that appears to be a promising epiphyte host is *Michelia doltsopa*. A year ago, I fixed a piece of the Australian *Dendrobium beckerii* to the trunk of our michelia and the orchid is now well attached, with roots running across the bark of the tree.

I am quite sure that high humidity, coupled with an ample supply of water, is a major factor in assisting the establishment of epiphytes. Be aware that some orchid species make a substantial part of their new root growth in the winter. Some Australian and New Zealand species have this behaviour. Although most of these notes refer to orchids, I expect they will be readily applicable to bromeliads, aroids, ferns and other epiphytic groups.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Members are invited to write in about any problems they have - identification, health and where to place specific plants as well as queries and comments on articles appearing in the magazine.**

**Our advisory members will endeavour to supply solutions & answers.**

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# BOOK REVIEW

## **‘Bromeliads for the contemporary garden’ by Andrew Steens**

**Reviewer – Rosemary Steele**

For many years the only locally written books available to would-be growers of bromeliads in New Zealand have been ‘Growing Bromeliads’ (The Bromeliad Society of Australia) edited by Barry E. Williams and Ian Hodgson, or ‘Bromeliads for Everyone’, a booklet written and published by Bea Hanson. There are also beautiful but very expensive books published overseas, but the beginner is unlikely to want to spend several hundred dollars. Now Andrew Steens, owner of Exotica nursery at Warkworth, has written a book which I think will be a great help to anyone wanting to grow these beautiful plants.

The first chapter describes their geographic distribution and the amazing range of ecological niches they occupy. This is followed by a “Landscaping with bromeliads” chapter which offers suggestions for sunny and shady gardens; growing them as epiphytes, both on trees and on rocks; pot culture; and use as indoor plants. There are plenty of ideas here, including a novel ‘curtain’ of tillandsias suspended on strings like an up-market version of the fly screens people used to have.

The bulk of the book, however, is a genus by genus coverage of the most garden-worthy species. We are warned in the introduction that the book is “not a comprehensive list of species for their own sake, or a description of the latest and most fantastic hybrids. Some of the larger genera such as *Tillandsia* and *Guzmania* are touched on only lightly; they are fantastic plants in their own right, but are not as useful for most gardeners...” How sensible! There is nothing worse than seeing some beautiful plant, only to find it is unavailable (and now, given the restrictions of the Biosecurity Act, unlikely to become available), or completely unsuited for our climate.

I now realise that many of our bromeliads are planted in the wrong places, so I can see that there will be lots of subdividing and moving once the weather warms up. I was pleased to see the tables indicating the frost-hardiness of various species, as well as the information on fertilisers.

The book has copious illustrations, both of individual species and of garden plantings. The latter provide lots of ideas for new ways to use these versatile plants. It is worth buying for the photos alone, especially as Mrs. Hanson’s booklet has line drawings, with ten colour photos on the



# DAVIDSON'S PLUM – AN AUSTRALIAN DELIGHT

## Robin Booth

With fruit up to 5cm long, a deep burgundy to nearly black when ripe and looking like a plum, *Davidsonia pruriens* or Davidson's Plum is a native 'tucker' food from the rainforest areas of north-east New South Wales and south-east Queensland. Called Ooray by the original inhabitants who relished it, it was widely used as a jam fruit by the first European settlers and today it is having a resurgence of interest as a commercial crop for jams and a very good, full-flavoured, dry red wine.

The small to medium sized tree is very ornamental with its compound, distinctly hairy, crinkly leaves, which can grow to a metre long. One of my sources says that some people can be irritated by these hairs, though I haven't noticed it. When a new growth flush occurs, it is bright pink to red which gradually fades to a deep green.

Davidson's Plum has the advantage of being able to be grown in sun or shade as long as the drainage is reasonably fast. Water is appreciated during dry times although I have found that it has grown quite happily here (Kerikeri) without extra water.

The tree is cauliferous - the flowers arise from the trunks of the tree much like our native kohekohe. The small self-fertile flowers appear in spring in clusters up to 20cm long on the stems. My best stem has set about sixteen fruit so they are quite productive.

I had my first fruits last year and I tried them raw. They were much too sour for me, so I stewed them and they were the best stewed fruit I have had.

May they ripen again soon!

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### **Continued:**

cover only. 'Growing Bromeliads', first published in 1988, has a limited number of small photographs. Occasionally the text is a little confusing and could have been better punctuated, but these are minor quibbles. It covers a greater range of species, in more detail, than either of the other books mentioned, and I think it will be most useful for anyone wanting to grow these diverse and beautiful plants.

(A Godwit Book, published by Random House 2003)

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## ***Dendrobium nobile* form**

This epiphytic and lithophytic orchid is highly variable in form, both botanically and horticulturally. It is widely distributed in the wild from India, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam to China, and is occasionally found growing in full sun at higher altitudes.

The pseudobulbous stems, that stretch outwards from the tree in the photograph, can be up to 60cm long. In this form, the usually fragrant flowers are highly coloured in a cerise-purple but many are white, marked with other colours. The long-lasting flowers arrive in spring to early summer. The photo was taken in late November in Kerikeri.

It is said that it is necessary to keep the plants fairly dry in winter in order to have a good spring flowering, but this can be achieved by growing them epiphytically, ensuring that the roots are drained quickly. The other advantage is that, if the orchids are attached at a height of 1.80-2m on the trunk or in a crotch, they will be protected from light frost by the canopy and the height above ground level.

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## ***Begonia haageana***

**(syn. *scharffii* in the USA)  
Elephants Ears**

This handsome, fibrous-rooted begonia from Brazil is mostly to be found in older gardens where, in good conditions, it forms a shrub-like clump up to two metres across and one and a half metres high. The evergreen perennial clump consists of multiple stems growing from the base of the plant.

In shade, the large, textured and hairy leaves are dark green and handsome. The reverse is a winy-red. In higher light levels, the leaves turn a pale olive-green. Too much shade makes the stems leggy and limits the quantity of flowers. These are held on branched panicles on long stems and are white with yellow stamens. Under the petals are red hairs and markings which, at a distance, give the impression at a distance that the flowers are pink.

*Begonia haageana* is everblooming and, although the flowers are not useful as cut flowers, in the garden it makes a wonderful show in winter in a frost-free, well-drained, moist and shady corner. It gives a tropical look when underplanted beneath palms and tree ferns.

An occasional feed and a topdressing of compost will ensure healthy, strong growth. Like most begonias it is easily propagated from cuttings.





# *Nopalxochia phyllanthoides*

## Grant Bayley

Contrary to the widely-held perception that cacti are desert plants, *N. phyllanthoides* is a subtropical, epiphytic, perennial cactus from the rainforests of Mexico.

The cactus stems look like thick leaves, and behave and function as such. They cascade to over one metre. They grow well perched in trees amongst aged leaf litter, or terrestrially in rich fertile acid soils.

This plant has been sold under several names including 'The Duchess', 'Empress' and 'Deutsche Kaiserin'. *N. phyllanthoides* prefers shade, such as in or hanging on a tree. They like being moist through the summer and can cope with the Auckland winter rains. Generally, if subjected to frosts they turn to mush. One year, I had unknowingly left the plant sitting in water through the Auckland winter and it continued growing. One surprising thing I have discovered is that this cactus has the amazing ability to root in water. But if you try this, make sure the cut surface has dried for several days first.

The spring flowers start out as green buds, then become light pink flowers (about 7cm across) that darken with age. On a well-grown plant, they open over more than a month. On a large plant, the odd flower may appear throughout the year.

The main problems these plants have are:

- Snails, which can remove the newly forming buds without being obvious, and later eat the stems.
- Fungus, that behaves as plant rusts and may appear as blisters or brown spots on the stems
- Mealybugs, on the stems or in the soil or both
- Aphids, – on the newly emerging flower buds

Needs are: shade, plenty of water (especially in summer) and fast drainage.

---

### Photos:

#### Top:

*Nopalxochia phyllanthoides* -

**In this particular form, the buds and flowers open a pure cream, then change to pale pink and deepen to almost cyclamen pink**

#### Bottom:

*Asplenium australasicum* -

**Photographed at Waipu growing terrestrially under a canopy of native trees, nikaus and tree ferns.**

# *Asplenium australasicum*

## Bird's Nest Fern

**Barbara Parris**

Bird's Nest ferns are species of asplenium, with simple, often glossy, fronds growing from a short tufted rhizome in a shuttlecock or vase shape. Rain water and leaf litter are channelled to the base of the fronds and the plant can root into the humus thus formed.

There are two species of Bird's Nest ferns sometimes sold as *Asplenium nidus* in New Zealand, neither being correctly named; *A. australasicum* is the larger and *A. antiquum* the smaller. The former has the mid-rib on the lower surface of the frond sharply keeled, a useful distinction from both *A. antiquum* and *A. nidus* which have the mid-rib flattened on the lower surface. *A. australasicum* is the easiest of the three to grow, *A. antiquum* is more demanding and *A. nidus* is essentially a tropical species that is unlikely to be in cultivation here.

*Asplenium australasicum* is native to Queensland and New South Wales and extends across the Pacific as far as Tahiti. In the wild, it is mainly an epiphyte, but is sometimes found on rocks, thus in cultivation free drainage is essential.

Large plants with fronds over a metre in length can be grown easily on shaded rocky banks and once established require little attention. As the fronds will bleach yellow in sunlight, shade is necessary and will also provide shelter against frost. Slugs and snails can also be a problem, particularly on the young, unrolling fronds.

Alternatively, it can be grown in well-drained potting mix as a houseplant in good light but not direct sunlight or as a specimen plant in shaded areas outside, so long as it is protected from frost. When grown outside under trees, no fertiliser is needed, but in other situations a spring feed of slow release fertiliser is appreciated.

There is a very large specimen of this fern growing about a kilometre away from us, near the beginning of the Kaituna River, which flows from Rotoiti to the sea. It grows near the lake edge, in the shade of an old michelia. It has obviously been there for many years, having a total span of 3.6 metres over its single crown, despite the rampant ladder ferns (*Nephrolepis cordata* - noxious weed) that surround it. In our travels around northern Queensland (the home of this species), we never saw one that exceeded this specimen in size.

**Nick Miller**

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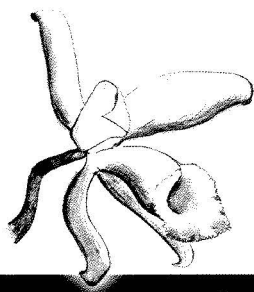
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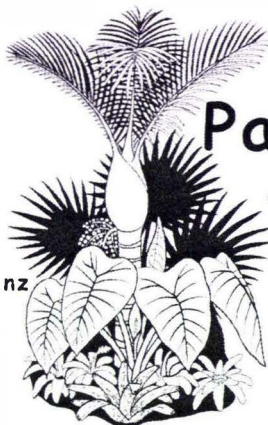
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## IN A MEDITERRRANEAN MOOD

### Edith McMillan

Like many other gardening styles, Mediterranean gardens (on both the northern and southern shores) have evolved using plants other than those native to the region. While brooms, cistus, echiums, figs, Holm oaks, lavenders, oleanders, olives, palms (*Chamaerops humilis* and *Phoenix canariensis*), pomegranates, rosemary, Aleppo pines and the bay tree (*Laurus nobilis*) make a distinctive and indigenous contribution, many of the plants that we think of as typically Mediterranean are, in fact, from other parts of the world.

The famed mimosa of the Mediterranean is *Acacia dealbata*, from Australia; agaves and yuccas from the Americas and aloes from South Africa are part of the large range of succulents and cacti grown; South American bougainvilleas (and their many hybrids) are everywhere; no garden is complete without citrus originating in south-east Asia and China; pelargoniums and plumbago both come from South Africa and jacarandas from the high deserts of Brazil and northern Argentina. Cabbage trees and flax (including many cultivars) are exported from New Zealand in enormous quantities, both to the Mediterranean and to California.

The most commonly grown cabbage tree, in both the Mediterranean and California, is *Cordyline australis*, because of its general hardiness and its ability to withstand dry summers, wind and some frost. Many gardeners prefer it to be multi-headed so, rather than wait for it to happen naturally (and to control the height at which it occurs), it is beheaded at that height.

#### ***Cordyline kasper***

The same effect can be achieved by using *Cordyline kasper* from the Great, North-east and South-west Islands of the Three Kings group. Like many other plants native to our offshore islands, *C. kasper* is frost tender. As it matures, it will survive light frosts but heavy ones will kill it. The trunk is shorter and heavier than *C. australis* and overall height tends to be between 3 and 5 metres, with branching occurring from about 1 metre upwards. An old specimen of *C. kasper* can have multiple heads, not unlike those of *Dracaena draco*. New stems can arise from the base of the plant but it does not normally clump.

The leaves are wider than *C. australis* and about 60 to 70cm long. The highly fragrant inflorescence extends beyond the leaves. The small berries are white and purple/grape coloured, making an attractive show for months – very effective in floral arrangements. Only classified as a separate species from *C. australis* in 1956, *C. kasper* was once difficult to obtain but now is usually available from native plant specialists.

**Colin Bradshaw**

*(At our conference on the 30<sup>th</sup> June this year, this plant was much admired for its large, bright yellow bloom and strong perfume. Members wanted to know more about this very unusual bulb – Ed.)*

This plant belongs to the Amaryllidaceae family. Confined to the one species, Cojomaria was first introduced to the United States in 1949. Its native habitat is in the vicinity of Paramongaia in Peru.

The bulb tends to flower in late autumn to winter, producing 60cm flower stalks with fragrant blooms 17.5cm in diameter. In appearance these resemble outside daffodils.

Paramongaia seems to be at home in the Auckland climate. Our specimen at the Auckland Domain has not had to face frost. It is pot grown in a well ventilated, unheated span frame. Cojomaria is related to the evergreen bulb, *Pamianthe peruvianum*, which we have grown for several years. The plant can be propagated from offsets, which should flower after three years. Although germination of seed is said to be easy, to my knowledge, no paramongaia has set seed in New Zealand. If the pamianthe is anything to go by, a seedling would flower in five years.

The foliage dies away as summer comes on. We let the plant stay in its container and withhold water during its dormancy. A well drained, slightly acid mix suits it best.

**Echeveria**

Of the many succulents grown in Mediterranean type climates, echeverias are very useful as small focal points in the garden. Mostly from Mexico, they can be found with foliage in the most amazing range of colours, textures and shapes. Some of these plants are so sculptural in form that they should be placed with the same care as a work of art.

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**Photos:**

**Top left – *Cordyline kaspar*, 4-5 years old.**

**Top right – *Paramongaia weberbaueri* photographed at the Auckland Domain on the 18<sup>th</sup> July. In its native habitat, it frequently grows on steep hillsides in rocky soils. It also grows under trees, in competition with the roots, on the sunny northern aspect. Where dry weather dormancy is not a problem, it is good for naturalising. Most summer dormant bulbs/corms flower before the leaves, but *P. weberbaueri* flowers at the same time as the leaves.**

**Bottom – *Echeveria*: unknown species or cultivar. Can anyone help to identify this plant?**





The basic form is the rosette, but the leaves can be frilled, wavy, pointed, rounded, edged with a contrasting colour and as well be glossy, furred or covered with a white bloom. The colour range is extensive, including brown and that rarity, blue. These are attributes that deserve greater imaginative use than is usually the case. And this is form and leaves alone.

As you can see from the photograph, some also have showy, long lasting flowers that cut well. Here the plant has been tucked into a space between rocks and soon will completely fill the space, looking good whether in flower or not. Relatively modest in size, echeverias can be overwhelmed by other plantings. Some varieties make good groundcovers but others merit solo treatment, perhaps in carefully placed pots. By doing this, they can be given the very fast drainage that they need to survive wet winters. Cold is not the problem, too much rain is.

While there are many species, there seem to be innumerable hybrids and cultivars. In future issues, perhaps we can show some of these being used aesthetically instead of as collector's treasures.

## **Aloe capitata**

**Brian Timms**

Gardeners generally think of aloes as being African in origin and indeed most of the species that have become popular for garden use are. But the succulent collector is aware that many of the choicest ones come from Madagascar, especially the many beautiful miniature species that are conveniently sized to grow in a glasshouse.

However, Madagascar has a number of aloes entirely suitable for the garden and this stunning plant is the best of them. *Aloe capitata* comes from the region of Tananarive, more or less in the centre (looking north to south) of the huge island, and has several varieties. It is usually found on bare rocky hillsides and, in its native habitat, is almost always single-headed, lacking a trunk unless growing in a damp, sheltered position. It has the usual stiff, succulent leaves, with spines on the edges that one expects with aloes. Note that, although aloes frequently have small spines on the leaf tips, they don't normally differ from those on the leaf-edge, unlike the often very strong sharp spikes (technically awns) sported by agaves.

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### **Photos:**

**Top - *Aloe capitata* var. *capitata* with many stems and about seventy-five flower heads.**

**Bottom right - *Aloe capitata*, with the usual single branched inflorescence.**

**Bottom left - *Aloe ciliaris***

Where *A. capitata* really differs from the crowd is in the flowers. Yellow flowers are unusual in aloes; they are mostly in shades of red to orange, although yellow, green and even white do occur, and combinations. (The red in the flowers in the photo is the petioles, as a careful examination will show.) But the most startling difference in *Aloe capitata* is that the flower racemes open from the top down. All other known aloe flower racemes open from the bottom up.

I mentioned varieties. This plant is *Aloe capitata* var. *capitata*. There are several others, not differing by very much for our purposes, which depend on their habitat. *A. capitata* var. *gniessicola* is found only on gneissic rocks, *quartzicola* is obvious, *cipolinicola* is found only on marble. A very interesting variety has been described, *silvicola*, which grows as an epiphyte on trees and shady rocks. The aloe expert, Reynolds, could not find it, but this is Madagascar and it could well be extinct by now.

As I mentioned earlier, the plant is single-headed in its native habitat. However, it is not uncommon for plants from arid habitats to grow more lushly in our favoured climate. Often they will produce more heads and faster growth than one expects. This particular plant was bought as a single rosette and, after a year in the garden, it went completely mad and produced over a dozen heads, to the consternation of the owner! I advised him not to worry, just sit back and enjoy it, as mine had done a similar thing a year or two earlier, in fact, becoming so lush that eventually I dug it up and gave it to a friend with a bigger garden and better drainage. The one in the picture is in a particularly favourable spot, with good drainage, full sun for much of the day and shelter from cold (essential for all succulent plants). Interestingly it has grown no more heads since that first spurt, just increased in size and produced this wonderful display each year in the middle of winter.

Please don't drive your local succulent plant supplier mad asking him for *Aloe capitata*. There were few plants available to begin with and it has proven difficult to increase the supply. But if you should find one or be offered one, grab it!

## ***Aloe ciliaris***

A half-hardy (0°C), scrambling, succulent perennial that will climb up and through other plants to three metres or more. The bright green, thick leaves cover the upper part of the stems, leaving the lower portions bare.

Like many South African aloes, flowering time is winter into spring. Although sun lovers, they will take some shade and are very useful for filling the odd, difficult corner. Easily trained and shaped, their bright red flowers brighten dull, wet days and growing requirements are minimal.

# SOURCES for this issue

*Aloe capitata* varieties – Coromandel Cacti, Landsendt, Tippetts  
*Aloe ciliaris* – Tippetts, Grey Lynn, mostly over the garden fence  
*Asplenium australasicum* – generally available  
*Begonia haageana* – another over the garden fence plant, but there will be some available at the next Subtropicals show  
*Bocconia arborea* – Nestlebrae Exotics, Helensville  
*Bocconia frutescens* – Wharepuke, Kerikeri  
*Burchellia bubalina* – Wharepuke  
*Canna* Yellow Humbert – Podgora Gardens, Waipu  
*Cantua pyrifolia* – Nestlebrae Exotics  
*Cordyline kaspar* – Russell Fransham, Matapouri Bay, Tippetts  
*Davidsonia pruriens* – Wharepuke, Joy Plants  
*Dendrobium nobile* – orchid specialists  
*Echeveria* – species/cultivars – succulent specialists usually have a range  
*Montanoa bipinnatifidum* – Nestlebrae Exotics  
*Nopalxochia phyllanthoides* – try Craigmyle Epiphyllum Nursery, 36 Manutahi Road, Bell Block, RD2 New Plymouth (mail order)  
*Parajubaea torallyi* – Landsendt  
*Paramongaia weberbaueri* – Joy Plants  
*Psoralea pinnata* – George Rainey supplied some to Palmers and Kings. If you see a tree, hunt for seedlings.  
*Sparmannia africana* – Ian Shoosmith, Manganui  
*Vrieseas* – Greens Bromeliads, Maungakaramea, Exotica, Matakana, Pottering About, Whakatane

## Wanted to sell...

### Exotic tree ferns

*Cyathea cooperi* and Papua New Guinea *Cyathea* species in 75litre Easylift bags.

Call Colin or Sandra on (09) 836-1676

Or fax to (09) 836-1677

### Wanted to buy

*Chamaedorea plumensis*

Call Marjorie on (09) 376 6874

**The Palm & Cycad Society of New Zealand meets on the first Tuesday of each month excepting January. The society arranges field trips and has a seed bank, library and a quarterly magazine.**

**Enquiries: (09) 296-7699 or PO Box 3871 Auckland.**

## CONFERENCE AND SHOW - 2003

Grateful thanks are due to the seven speakers at the conference for giving the members such an interesting variety of talks and increasing their plant knowledge – a common refrain was how much each member had learnt.

Robin Booth, energetically waving foliage and facts around; Colin Clark, with his suggestions on incorporating native plants into the subtropical garden; Russell Fransham, extending our knowledge of cordylines, plain and fancy; Nick Miller, demonstrating how little most of us knew about gesneriads; Barbara Parris, proving that damp shade was not the only place to grow ferns; Martin Walker, giving lots of clues on how to set up good growing conditions for succulents; and finally Peter Waters, the last speaker, showing us with his beautiful plants that there is more to bromeliads than air plants.

The Master of Ceremonies was Brian Timms who, not only kept everything running smoothly, but rounded off the day with a plant auction, which had everyone in stitches. And while they were laughing, he made them pay quite outrageous prices for some of the plants. All were sold, raising more than six hundred dollars for the Society (and Brian said he had never run an auction before!)

And of course, the food. Rosemary Steele (and her daughters) slaved away all weekend providing home cooked edibles that included real pea and ham soup and those rarely, rarely seen comestibles – “**Ginger Gems**” – of childhood memory.

Everyone lent a hand where they could and Saturday evening was spent setting up the hall for the show on Sunday. Landscaping members, John Lister, Jenny Pullar and Alex Schanzer, worked like demons setting up the display (and taking it down again on Sunday night). This was really hard work and generously carried out.

The weather was so bad early on Sunday morning that many felt that a disaster was about to happen. To the surprise of all, a queue formed in the rain and, to prevent the early birds from drowning, the doors were opened and foyer filled rapidly. Over the next few hours, people streamed (very appropriately) in steadily and there were over five hundred eager buyers and willing sellers packing the hall. It became obvious that the hall was not really large enough, even for our first effort. The entry fees raised a further twelve hundred dollars.

And 2004? Enthusiasts would like a bigger and better venue so, on the last weekend in June next year, the **SUBTROPICALS** Society will be holding a conference, plant sale and exhibition of outdoor sculpture at the ASB Stadium in Kohimaramara (360 carparking spaces!) We hope that all our willing helpers (thank you) and stallholders will return bigger and brighter than ever and that other members will join in the fun.

**Marjorie Lowe**



# *Cantua pyrifolia*

*Cantua* belongs to the Polemoniaceae, a family more usually associated with herbaceous plants like *Phlox* and *Linanthus*, or climbers like *Cobaea* (the latter now classified as an undesirable plant in New Zealand, unfortunately). It is a small genus of about nine species from the Andes, mostly in Peru.

All species are evergreen or semi-deciduous shrubs with pendulous tubular flowers borne in clusters at the ends of thin arching branches. They prefer moist, humus-enriched soil in full sun and should be pruned to stop them becoming too straggly. They can be propagated from tip cuttings or seed and will withstand light frosts.

*C. pyrifolia* comes from the mountains of Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia and can reach 5m, although it is usually smaller. The attractive yellow and white flowers appear in early spring.

(Photo page 42)

**Rosemary Steele**

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## **SUBTROPICALS Website**

Visit our website <http://subtropicals.co.nz>

### **Feedback:**

Yes, we need your feed back to help improve our web site.

The more useful we can make this site, the better for all those who visit it.

### **Links:**

We encourage members to put a link on their website to our website. Let us know you've done this and we'll reciprocate.

### **The site:**

At present the main page consists of a display of the various magazine covers and photo/s of a subtropical plant, shown in a previous magazine. The left column has the list of our pages for you click on.

### **Site information:**

Click on for an easy way to understand the make-up of this site.

### **Printing out:**

To print any page, click on the heading **SUBTROPICALS**, then do what is normal for a print out.

### **Your own web pages:**

Have you thought about or would like, your own web page/s on our web site? For further information see page 32 of this issue.

### **Contact:**

**[grant.bayley@clear.net.nz](mailto:grant.bayley@clear.net.nz)**

# BACK COVER STORY

## *Montanoa bipinnatifida* Rosemary Steele

Mexican Tree Daisy

One of the glories of our garden in late autumn, this is a rarely seen shrub which should be more widely grown. Writing in 'Gardens of the Sun', Trevor Nottle says it has 'noble leaves, deeply divided into pointed divisions and towering heads of white daisies in autumn'... and he believes it deserves greater recognition in our gardens. It is a tree daisy, originating in Mexico, with deep green leaves up to 40cm long on tall stems reaching at least 5m. These have huge terminal heads of white daisies, each flower 5-7.5cm across. The monarch butterflies love them and feast greedily on the nectar. Once the flowers finish, the seed heads are attractive too: lime-green balls which would look good in flower arrangements.

We grow a related species as well, *M. grandiflora*, but this is not nearly as spectacular. The leaves are a softer, paler green and the flowers are borne in smaller heads that are much less showy (despite the name). The seed heads are white and attractive in their own right.

Both species are somewhat frost-tender but are splendid plants for the back of the border where nearby plants can help support their somewhat leggy growth and provide wind protection. Our specimens have both been undamaged by recent light frosts.

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### Back cover:

**In early winter *Montanoa bipinnatifidum*, heavily in flower, soars against a bright blue sky at Nestlebrae Exotics. Below, a clump of *Kniphofia* Winter Cheer does exactly that. A very Mediterranean look for a nearly frost-free garden.**

**Photo: Rosemary Steele**

### Inside back cover:

**Top - Close-ups showing the tall stems, striking leaves and daisy flowers of *Montanoa bipinnatifida*, with a bright orange canna still in flower below.**

**Photos: Grant Bayley**

### Bottom:

**The bare arching stems of *Cantua pyrifolia* with their narrow rosemary-like leaves, are enhanced by the bunches of bright yellow and white tubular flowers in spring.**



