



**FRIENDS OF  
HAMILTON  
GARDENS**  
*Journal*

SPRING 2025 | VOLUME 28



# MEET THE FRIENDS

## Our role

As a Friend of Hamilton Gardens you know you are making a valuable contribution to our recognised internationally significant garden. You have the opportunity to assist with hands-on horticultural tasks, an opportunity to become a volunteer in the Visitor Centre, an opportunity to become a Gardens' tour guide and to enjoy social gatherings with other Friends.

## Our aims

- Promote public awareness of the Gardens
- Promote the use and enjoyment of the Gardens
- Assist with the development of the Gardens
- Raise funds to support projects in the Gardens that operational budgets don't cover

We thank you for the enormous contribution you all make to the Gardens and the image of Hamilton City as a tourist destination.



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# CONTENTS

<b>PRESIDENT'S REPORT</b>	<i>Ralph Evans</i>	<b>4</b>
<b>WELCOMING THE WORLD WITH A SMILE</b>	<i>Gail Blackwell</i>	<b>6</b>
<b>A GATEWAY TO BEAUTY</b>	<i>Lucy Ryan</i>	<b>8</b>
<b>INFLUENCES THAT SHAPED MEDIEVAL GARDENS</b>	<i>Peter Sergel</i>	<b>12</b>
<b>WASTE NOT WANT NOT</b>	<i>Eileen Wilcox</i>	<b>16</b>
<b>REVITALISING THE ENGLISH GARDEN</b>	<i>Gus Flower</i>	<b>18</b>
<b>BUILDING A LEGACY ONE PIECE AT A TIME</b>	<i>Interview with Glen Morris</i>	<b>22</b>
<b>GROWING COMMUNITY FUTURES TOGETHER</b>	<i>Go Eco Team</i>	<b>26</b>
<b>EXCLUSIVE OUTER GARDENS TOURS 2025</b>	<i>Carol Web</i>	<b>28</b>
<b>BONSAI TELLS A STORY OF WHERE A TREE HAS GROWN</b>	<i>Peter Mudie</i>	<b>30</b>
<b>ROSE CARE FOR THE HOME GARDENER</b>	<i>Eileen Wilcox</i>	<b>34</b>
<b>NOTES FROM JUDY'S GARDEN</b>	<i>Judy Holdsworth</i>	<b>38</b>
<b>SUPPORTERS OF FRIENDS OF HAMILTON GARDENS</b>		<b>40</b>





# JOINING THE DOTS

## *From garden to garden*

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Friends of Hamilton Gardens president Ralph Evans reviews the past year and looks ahead at the next goals.

Welcome, gentle reader, to the 2025 edition of the Friends of Hamilton Gardens Journal. Whether you're a member who has looked forward to this since the last one, or a non-member reading it for the first time (information on becoming a member on page 7), there should be something within for you.

As always the year has been quite varied, somewhat like the seasons, the big news being the official conclusion of fundraising for the Medieval Garden, and the current construction work taking place behind the scenes: expected opening sometime next year (2026). Which means our fundraising thoughts now shift focus to the Baroque Garden, the next project in the list that still stretches before us, probably for a couple of decades. This is one of the primary goals of the charitable society that sits behind all we do, the other being the promotion of the Gardens to the public at large – who are yet to become members (see above).

We are always looking for practical, innovative ways to raise further funds for future Gardens, which is both challenging and at the same time part of the fun, ably supported on a smaller scale by regular things like the Propagating Group plant sales (excellent value, excellent plants), sausage sizzles at events, collection boxes, and online donations.

Peter Sergel's book has been reprinted, having proved even more popular than expected, so if you don't have yours yet you can get a copy through the Hamilton Gardens Shop. A lot of excellent pictures, and filled with the very dry wit of the author. Remember that this work sets a benchmark, making it very clear we are only mid-way in the

unfolding vision that informs the planning and fundraising required to bring each new Garden to life. All the profits from the book go into the fundraising pot, too.

The Visitor Centre opening was a gala affair, and a real celebration of all the hard work that has been done to bring the facilities up to the same standard as the Gardens themselves. The internal space and entry precinct both feel very welcoming, and always seem to be busy – which is a good thing, and reflects growing numbers of visitors: which has to be a very heartening outcome for the entire Hamilton Gardens team, who all work exceptionally hard to ensure visitors have the best possible experience, ably assisted by our very own Visitor Centre Volunteers. Of course, as a result of the increased activity, parking can be at a premium on a fine day, with people parking on Grey Street and walking through the underpass, or visiting by bus if they're locals – yes, there IS a dedicated bus, the Number 17, which also travels out to the university.

If you haven't done it yet, don't forget to collect your Hamilton Gardens Card – for Hamilton City locals – well worth the effort, but do remember to take a proof of address and who you are. The team are very helpful, so it's a fairly easy process. There is a 50% discount on annual passes to the gardens for Friends living outside Hamilton

In closing, let me encourage you to make use of the Gardens at every feasible opportunity – walks, picnics, visiting events, dropping in to the café, walking the dog (in the Outer Gardens, and on a leash), there's a very long list – and encourage all your friends to do the same. And, of course, suggest they join Friends of Hamilton Gardens (as mentioned above), if they haven't already. Wishing you all a great year ahead.





As I am relatively new to Volunteering at Hamilton Gardens I have taken this opportunity to delve into our history. I discovered our volunteer programme dates back before the 1990s, when community members began offering their time to help with gardening, planting, weeding, basic maintenance tasks and event support. Many early parts of the Gardens were developed from the generosity of the vibrant Societies at the time.

The Tropical House was opened in 1960 and in 1962 the Cacti House. 1970 the Rogers Rose Garden began, opening in 1971 for the First World Rose Convention.

Initially plans were for the Gardens to be a Botanical Garden but in the 1980s Peter Sergel's vision to emphasize and illustrate the historical and philosophical perspectives of gardening was adopted. These gardens have progressively developed with the help of philanthropists, fundraising and Hamilton City Council support.

In 1989, Friends of Hamilton Gardens was established, supporting the development of the Gardens with fundraising and donating special items to the gardens. For example, Scarecrow-man in the Kitchen Garden and the Ford T in the Katherine Mansfield Garden are just two of many donated items.

As Peter Sergel's concept gardens vision expanded, so too did our volunteer responsibilities.

By the early 2000s, Friends of Hamilton Gardens was formalised under the Hamilton Gardens Trust, with volunteers now assisting in a small shop, providing maps and selling souvenirs, guided tours, leading school groups and special events.

## *Volunteering at Hamilton Gardens*

# WELCOMING THE WORLD WITH A SMILE

Gail Blackwell summarises the evolution of volunteer work at the Gardens.

A major change in 2024 was the redevelopment of the Gallagher Information Centre, now a modern, welcoming space where our volunteers can better assist visitors. Although we no longer handle money transactions, as the employed staff now manage the entry fee, our time is now focused on manaakitanga - hospitality and kindness.

Our Volunteers are now “front-of-house ambassadors” who welcome visitors with a smile, offer guidance using the map, while also offering personal recommendations for exploring the unique, award-winning gardens that celebrate design, culture, and history.

We are so fortunate that some of our current volunteers have served for over 20 years, offering a living memory of the gardens’ evolution and a testament to their enduring connection to this unique place. Their knowledge is invaluable and many help mentor new volunteers, passing on both skills and passion.

Our Volunteer role has also expanded beyond the front desk. The addition of the “Roaming Volunteer” role brings volunteers directly into the themed gardens. Whether in the Italian Renaissance or the Surrealist Garden, these volunteers offer real-time guidance, answer questions, and help visitors immerse themselves more fully in the garden experience.

As Hamilton Gardens continues to grow, so too does the importance of our volunteers. Whether in the Information Centre or walking among the themed gardens, volunteers ensure every visitor feels welcomed, informed, and inspired.

I am so proud to be part of this unique taonga of the Waikato and look forward to the new gardens and ever-changing role of our volunteers.

Encourage your friends, family, and colleagues to become members of Friends of Hamilton Gardens.



**FRIENDS  
OF HAMILTON  
GARDENS**

## Share the Experience!

Every new Friend adds strength to our community and ensures the Gardens continue to grow.


### Why become a member?

- Be connected to one of NZ's most iconic and inspiring spaces
- Receive exclusive updates, event invitations, and insights
- Support the preservation and development of our internationally celebrated gardens
- Exclusive discount opportunities with local retailers and providers
- As a member, one can also become a volunteer, joining a team of passionate supporters working behind the scenes.

### Volunteer opportunities

- Welcome visitors at the Visitor Centre and offer assistance in navigating the gardens. Comprehensive training provided.
- Contribute to the success of various events held during the year.
- Participate in weekly propagating sessions and monthly sales of new plants that contribute to the Gardens' ongoing growth.

**Click here to find out more about the  
Friends of Hamilton Gardens**



The new entry acts as a gateway and a beacon.



## *A Gateway To Beauty:*

# CELEBRATING HAMILTON GARDENS' NEW ENTRY PRECINCT

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**Lucy Ryan, director of Hamilton Gardens, celebrates the opening of the new entry precinct, gateway and visitor centre.**

We did it! On September 18th, 2024, we celebrated the culmination of a long but rewarding journey with the completion of the Entry Precinct project and the introduction of paid entry, marking the beginning of numerous benefits for the gardens and Hamilton.

Working with Edward White Architects, we've designed a new space that reflects our history and purpose, embedded with manaakitanga. Our new precinct now serves as a gateway to something extraordinary and adds another dimension to our world-class gardens.

Central to our vision was the principle of manaakitanga – extending hospitality, care, and respect to all. We wanted to honour the historic and ongoing significance of this place to Mana Whenua and Ngaati Wairere, the first gardeners of this area, while balancing pragmatism, respect for our site's heritage, and a commitment to exceptional visitor experience.

So, not only does our new entry act as a gateway and beacon, providing visitor comfort, but it also represents the awa (river). Large vertical posts inspired by traditional Maaori gardening tools form a palisade around the courtyard, providing guardianship for all that is within. The niho taniwha motif in corten steel reflects local tukutuku

panel patterns, and within the Fern Court, a whaariki (woven mat) has been embedded into the concrete surface. It has a distinctive Tainui pattern, Te Hera o Tainui, believed to be used for the Tainui waka sail. In this context, it symbolises welcoming people and nations from 'ngaa hau e whaa' (the four winds) to this region; no matter where you're visiting from, you are welcome here.

The design pattern in the Gallagher Visitor Centre represents kaitiakitanga, reflecting our guardianship of Hamilton Gardens and our guests. The pattern in the Pavilion and event spaces embodies manaakitanga, showcasing the kindness, respect, and support we provide to all visitors. The Tomokanga features significant motifs unique to Waikato, Tainui, honouring ancestors who have passed, representing them with mana, and reminding us that our actions reflect on our ancestors.

The Gallagher Visitor Centre facilitates paid entry, offers information services, and includes a gift shop that is vital for our financial health. This approach helps lessen the load on ratepayers and showcases our confidence in the value we provide, particularly as we rank in the top 1% of visitor experiences on TripAdvisor and are frequently rated among the best gardens globally.

Beyond the precinct and paid entry, we've redeveloped our Guided Tours and Audio Guides, along with new signage, to help visitors understand the stories behind our gardens. Dr Peter Sergel's book, *The Time Traveller's Guide to Hamilton Gardens*, has also been crucial to this effort, with the first print run selling out quickly.

We're developing a range of Hamilton Gardens products, including candles, perfumes, artworks, and jewellery, centred around the Kaitiakitanga pattern. Every item bought helps the gardens, and with international travellers taking gifts home with them, we're taking the gardens to the world, especially via Peter's book and the upcoming associated documentary, developed by the Hamilton Gardens Development Trust. All of these initiatives help share the unique stories and beauty of Hamilton Gardens with a global audience.

Lastly, we want the precinct area to be a space for activation and enhancement, limited only by imagination. This vision proved itself beautifully during the Hamilton Arts Festival, which infused culture and vibrancy into the gardens and the city. In 2025, the festival saw over 47,000 attendees, with 30% from outside Waikato. Featuring 49 shows by over 800 performing artists, the festival brings the gardens to life and allows the arts to be celebrated in a truly unique venue. What enhances the gardens also uplifts the city, and what uplifts the city, in turn, benefits the gardens – HAF is a perfect example of this harmony.

Hamilton Gardens is such a special place, and we aspire for it to remain treasured by locals and to be a must-see destination for both international and domestic tourists. For all of us who work here, we are keenly aware of the privilege of working in such a unique and special place. We are also fully conscious that these gardens are a testament to what can be achieved when passion, dedication, and community come together. Here's to many more years of growth, ensuring we remain a source of pride and joy for generations to come.



# Save big at Mitre 10 MEGA Te Rapa & Ruakura with the new **Friends of Hamilton Gardens Members Discount**

- A competitive discount across our entire 40,000+ product range
- Exclusively available for members of Friends of Hamilton Gardens

## How do I use the new discount?

Simply scan the discount barcode available to registered members at our checkouts, enter the PIN code & the discount is applied. Easy As!



Mitre 10 MEGA Hamilton  
Te Rapa - Maahanga Drive, The Base  
Ruakura - 41 Ruakura Road, Hamilton East

Proudly locally owned by Hayden & Abby!





## INFLUENCES THAT SHAPED MEDIEVAL GARDENS

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Peter Sergel, former director of Hamilton Gardens, discusses the history underpinning the new Medieval Garden.



The new Medieval Garden will soon be completed at Hamilton Gardens, filling a large time gap in the collection of historic forms of garden.

Throughout history there have been a number of major developments that have shaped the modern world, such as the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment or the development of agriculture. If the development of civilisation is seen as a game of snakes and ladders, then these transformations can be seen as the ladders that have shaped the modern world. They were triggered when a population started to see the world through a different lens, leading to profound and permanent change. One of the results of seeing the world through a different lens was a changed relationship to the natural world and that resulted in distinct new forms of garden, each represented in the collection of thirty existing and proposed gardens in Hamilton Gardens. One of these fundamental transformations was the result of the spread of Christianity.

After the fall of the Roman empire, Europe was a continent of warring tribes until the Age of Faith which lasted until 1300. Church leaders may have had to endure luxury but their congregations were told that beauty and fun, like luxury, would imperil the soul. So up until 1000 A.D. little evidence has been found of gardens that weren't just for food production. In fact far more is known about the earlier Roman gardens. However, two significant types of garden were being developed in the monasteries that reflected three significant aspects of the early Christian church: The physic garden and the cloister garth and those are the two garden forms that have been developed at Hamilton Gardens.

The physic or apothecary's garden was important because it grew the medicinal herbs for the monastic infirmary, the first form of European hospital. The story of the Good Samaritan inspired the idea

of help for strangers who were injured or sick, as well as help for local communities. The Romans had introduced many useful plants to England, including medicinal ones, but most seemed to have been lost after they left. A few survived in the wild like fennel, ground-elder and wormwood that had been introduced by the Romans to cure wind, gout and worms. However, the monasteries developed trading networks that gradually introduced

more medicinal plants from as far away as Baghdad. Examples in this garden would have been used to produce purgatives, salves, medicines, tonics, skin ointments, eye drops, sedatives, stimulants, French enemas, infusions as well as the painkillers for the regular bloodletting. Monks were bled at least four times a year, apparently to produce musician voices and to prevent undesirable behaviour. Pigs grease was used as an ointment base but medieval cures make you realise that our modern doctors focus on quite a narrow range of issues. For example, *Hypericum perforatum* (St John's Wort) and peony seeds were thought to repel evil spirits, *Vinca major* (periwinkle) helped with love and fertility and *Aloe* species cured hemorrhoids and baldness. Surplus herbs were dried and stored. The word drug comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *driggen* meaning to dry.

The cloister garth or *claustrum* was the heart of the monastery community, with the key facilities leading off it. It functioned as



a peaceful minimalist garden, with the cloisters used for reading, studying the Bible, prayer and meditation, with the only external view being 'the divine territory of the sky'. There are obvious similarities with the equally mystic Japanese temple Zen gardens. Only monks were allowed to use the cloister garth and the laity were always excluded. You, the laity, won't be permitted into the cloister garth at Hamilton Gardens either, unless you have a note from an abbot or cardinal saying that you are some sort of monk. (The alternative to taking Holy Orders and regular bloodletting is to go on a Hamilton Gardens behind the scenes tour.) You can, however, sneak a peek of it through a doorway at the side of the physic garden.

Old records show that St Augustine specified that these areas should have a square of perfect 'green cloth' with sweet smelling herbs. It needed to be low and flat so rather than sit around waiting for Edward Budding to invent the lawn mower in 1832, medieval monks beat this herbage down flat with wooden mallets. The herbs in this 'green cloth' included sweet smelling plants like rue, sage and basil. While there is no mention of the use of grasses, this flat green patch was referred to as the laund, from which the word lawn is derived. The only other planting was a central tree which symbolised Christ and was sometimes referred to as the Tree of Life.

Apart from these important garden functions of prayer, study and care for strangers, a third central tenet of the early Christian faith was a belief in a secret canon of numbers and proportions that were said to be derived from Holy Scripture. For example, the divine proportion specified to Moses for constructing the Ark of the Covenant which, legend suggests, was a ratio of 1 to 1.618. The source for most of these seems more likely to have come from the theories of early philosophers like Pythagoras, Plato, Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas, Nikolaus Von Kues and Plotinus, but particularly St Augustine (205-270). Augustine came from Algeria and one of his best known quotes

was 'Lord give me chastity and continence, but not yet'. He didn't just specify the cloister garth laund, his guidelines influenced medieval design and aesthetics for over a thousand years, promoting order, unity, key numbers, orientation and proportions. So to design anything for a monastery garden, a cathedral or even a mosque you needed to start with the sacred geometry that he was promoting.

Like most ancient gardens, orientation was considered important. While Egyptian temple gardens all faced the rising sun (except ours), medieval courts were orientated to the four points of the compass. The square and the circle were fundamental. The perfectly square courtyard was associated with stability, order and the material world while the circle, represented in our garden by a round pool, was linked to infinity and a divine spiritual world. They were combined in subtle ways by both Christians and Muslims to symbolise the equilibrium between heaven and earth. For example, the round dome over the square room at the entrance to our Indian Char Bagh Garden was common in medieval Islamic architecture. Both were also related to the human body by Vitruvius whose theory was made famous



An example of the flat green patch at the heart of the cloister garth.

by Leonardo's famous drawing of Vitruvian Man that shows how a human figure (with four arms and four legs) defines a square and a circle. The medieval designers thought that this was the ideal basis for architectural proportions, conveniently overlooking the fact that human proportions vary a lot. You can test this for yourself by copying this image but your spread arms and legs are more likely to define some sort of lopsided trapezium, rather than a square, and your navel probably isn't anywhere near the centre of the circle.

A perfectly square courtyard with a round pool and a pentagonal water feature were seen as a microcosm of a divine mathematical order. The water feature was often elaborate because it represented the Virgin Mary, the fount of life, but there wasn't often the water pressure for a spectacular fountain. The water generally trickled out but we can't say 'piddled out' because, according to my 1864 dictionary, in medieval times piddle meant 'to pick at one's food', which probably happened each time you were served boiled turnip with glossops and buttered leeches. Mystical pentagonal objects, like the one in the centre of our Physic Garden, were used in most ancient cultures usually associated with magic and the occult. The pentagon represented harmony, good deeds, charity and balance as well as the five classical elements of earth, air, fire, water and ether. For the early Christians it more commonly referred to the five wounds of Christ, the five books of Moses, the five petals of a rose and five rings in the transit of Venus, which can also be seen used in many old stained glass windows.

Medieval gardens - like medieval art, architecture and literature - were full of these symbols intended to be aids to private contemplation. These ranged from the direction of the sun on key dates to the symbolic meaning of certain plants. For example, the red *Rosa gallica* signified the blood of the martyrs and the white lily represented faith, peace and the Virgin Mother.

By the time of the High Middle Ages (1000-1500) more royal ornamental gardens were being developed and by 1300 the gardens of wealthy office holders, like bishops, were generally taking the forms we recognise as early renaissance gardens. But you could still see medieval elements in these. For example, the layout of the Italian Renaissance Garden at Hamilton Gardens was based on a series of squares and circles and having the twelve square beds was usually intended to represent the twelve apostles. The small scale Prato court at the top of this garden represents the larger prato spaces in renaissance gardens that were derived from monastic cemetery orchards, usually located next to the infirmary.

There are still echoes of ancient medieval gardens such as occasional architectural gothic revivals. However, by the 16th century and the Reformation, new forms of garden, like the Tudor Garden, suggest that the influence of St Augustine's theories seem to have faded away.



References: John Harvey, *Mediaeval Gardens*, BT Batsford, 1981. Sylvia Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden*, University of Toronto Press, 1995. Michael Leslie, *A Cultural History of Gardens in the Medieval Age*, Bloomsbury, 2016. Teresa McLean, *Medieval English Gardens*, Collins, 1981. Tom Turner, *Garden History - Philosophy and Design 2000 BC-2000 AD*, Spon Press, 2005



## WASTE NOT WANT NOT

Friends of Hamilton Gardens' propagation group are a growing group in more way than one, reports Eileen Wilcox.

With rising costs of almost everything in these uncertain economic times, propagating garden plants can be a simple and cash saving solution. Propagating cuttings however does take time to produce a viable plant that will thrive in a garden. Gardeners therefore need to weigh up the decision of buying an instant plant at a garden centre (often costly) against the time it takes to grow a plant from a cutting – which is very satisfying.

Most plants will grow from cuttings, division, and less common is layering. The process of taking cuttings is simple enough and economical. The end result is a plant grown on its own roots which will have the exact characteristics of the parent plant. Seedlings are less likely to be an exact replica of their parents.

Many plants will grow from the seed you can save at the end of each growing season. If one is not hooked up on a neat and tidy garden most annuals can be left to set seed which will appear in the following growing season. Cosmos, larkspur, zinnias, and marigolds (tagetes) are just some of the great summer annuals that readily seed and are also favoured by bees. Later in the Autumn small birds will feast on the seedheads which is another bonus in a garden. Winter annuals such as pansies, primula, violas, calendulas, Iceland poppies will also set seed. Collecting seed as the seed heads mature is easy to do, just put the dry seeds into an envelope and label and plant out again at the appropriate time.

The Friends propagating group grow plants mainly from cuttings and division to produce plants that we are able to sell to fundraise for the Gardens Development Fund.

Some perennial plants are hard to source from garden centres but are



still firm favourites with gardeners. For example, Lily of the Valley is very sought after as it is rarely offered for sale in garden outlet stores.

It is a little concerning that some of the old-fashioned cottage garden plants are becoming rarer these days so we see our propagation group as an important way of “spreading the love” so to speak. We have customers who say, “oh I have been trying to find this for ages”.

Occasionally we learn of an old house that is to be demolished for redevelopment. We have rescued plants from these sites, which are often overgrown and abandoned. Some of the plants are real treasures that are hard to source anymore and provide a good stock for cuttings.

Our best winter sellers are hellebores which we are able with permission from HCC Garden Staff to source from the Governors Lawn area. We take small seedlings each year to grow on, it takes at least two years to do this. Our hellebores are mostly the double flowering varieties and come in a colour range of white, pink, deep mauve and burgundy. The dark shaded varieties are the most favoured by the public.

Ajuga is also a steady seller as are herbs and small native trees. During the Covid period house plants and succulents were in demand but the market for these has tailed off over the past 18 months.

We do stock zygocacti, sometimes known as chain cacti or Christmas cacti as they flower around the Christmas period in the Northern Hemisphere. These are really popular when in flower. We have been fortunate to source some alternative colours apart from the old crimson pink that our grandparents grew. These cacti are easy to propagate but again it does take two years to grow a plant that is suitable for sale. Also worth noting that these are the only variety of

cacti we are prepared to work with. All other varieties have spines which are not user friendly for our group or our customers.

We are very fortunate to have a great working relationship with HCC Garden Staff; and are often given pieces of plants that have been divided or small seedlings. Hopefully we will have some blue echium seedlings from the Time Court for sale during the coming spring. These are spectacular plants that the bees love, so are an important addition to a healthy garden.

Also fortunately we obtain some of the roses that are routinely removed from the Rogers Rose Garden every winter. New rose varieties are planted each year for the Rose Trials that happen in November. Surprisingly last winter we sold almost all the rose bushes we were given.

Dahlias seem to have made a great comeback in recent years and we can sell anything that is in bloom. The new varieties come in an amazing array of softer colours, flowering from mid-summer until mid-autumn. Bromeliads are popular when we have visitors to the Gardens from Auckland or further north where frost isn't an issue. Some months we sell several and other months not so many.

Our monthly sale date is the first Saturday of each month, we are sited under the sail in the fern court in front of the new Visitors' Centre. We are delighted with the site as we are out of the worst of the weather conditions in winter and enjoy the shade during the summer.

Our team meet on a Friday morning at our yard for our weekly potting session, we work outside on all but very wet days. We enjoy our weekly time spent together and feel we are making a worthwhile contribution to our wonderful Hamilton Gardens.



Investigations revealed poor quality and limited topsoil with a heavy presence of gley

# REVITALISING THE ENGLISH GARDEN

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**Operations manager Gus Flower explains the steps involved in renewing a 36-year-old garden.**

In 1989 the English Garden was opened and was the first of our six Paradise Gardens. It was inspired by the 'Arts and Crafts' movement which flourished during the late 1860s and up until the First World War. Emerging out of Britain, it encompassed a belief and yearning for simplicity, natural elements and creating things that were decorative as well as useful. For gardening this meant turning away from the formal gardenesque style of showcasing flowers and plant collections and neat uniform bedding. Instead, it was harmonising with nature and is also referred to as the Natural Style. It used colour and texture with its tonal plantings, water features and simple paths connecting with structures like pergolas and trellises to create 'garden rooms'.

Over the past 36 years our English Garden has attracted countless visitors and hosted a huge range of events and special occasions. In spring and through to late summer this garden really comes into its own, with a truly wonderful display of garden colour, texture and form that coined the phrase 'gardens of a golden afternoon.' Naturally, over this time the garden has matured and like all living things, the plants there have had their moments. Some have weakened over the years or under-performed, outgrown their space, suffered from pests and diseases or died. The fact is, you can't plant a garden and expect it to perform and live forever - there comes a point when tough decisions, actions and replacement are required.

So, a decision was made that new life was needed to rejuvenate this garden treasure of ours and on the 24th of March it was decided to close the garden to the public and re-open for the spring season. Needless to say, a great deal of planning and discussing of the details with the whole team across the unit had taken place beforehand, and making sure that all the comms, marketing and signage was thoroughly coordinated to allow the works to start. One of the pleasures of being involved in a project like this is working with the different teams at Hamilton Gardens and gaining an appreciation of the great work they do, much of it being behind the scenes.

However, the greatest pleasure for me is the garden itself and being able to bring much needed fresh new plants into it. The first thing to say is that this is not a wish list of people's favourite plants, it's vital that we remain true to the original design and plant selection if we are to retain the concept and integrity of this garden. It is this philosophy and protocol that must be followed with all of our gardens, otherwise we would not be Hamilton Gardens. Recently I was heartened to hear a comment on our Facebook page by someone saying that they were pleased to see us spending time and money on some of the older gardens. So much is made of the opening of a new garden, and I totally get it, but working on a project like this gives me as much excitement as being involved in our next garden, the Medieval Garden.

To explain the actual work being undertaken, it is best to break it down to the areas of the garden and type of work scheduled (this article was written on 17th April). The main entrance from the Cloud Court had been widened while the new precinct project work was in progress, so this now requires reformatting with some additional totara hedging being put in place and a new sign. Entering this area, it was decided to replace much of the plantings here but to retain the wonderful specimen lime tree. The rose arbour as with all the doors, dove cote and white seat are to be repaired where needed and repainted.

The Long Border needed attention with some of the over-sized and weakened shrubs requiring replacements. The opportunity was taken to dig up and divide the majority of the perennials here and then replant with a more accurate representation of the colour scheme inspired by Gertrude Jekyll. Remember, she helped to pioneer the idea of a perennial border running with cold colours of white and grey on the ends and warmer colours of yellow and orange coming in towards the red-hot centre. This arrangement also helps to create the illusion of the border being larger than it actually is. With so many of the perennials being divided we will take advantage to redistribute some plants to other gardens like the Victorian Flower Garden or the Katherine Mansfield Garden.

Sadly, the beech hedging was badly infested with borer and will now be replaced with a holly hedge which will provide a better screen and backdrop for the border during the winter months. At the end of the border behind the fountain, two new brick pillars will stand with a gate for access. Once the stumps of the beech hedging have been removed, we will assess the quality of the soil in the border to determine how much fresh soil needs to be brought into this area. In recent years we had a problem in the White Garden where the soil died. Such was its quality, that the team had to replace it. This part

of the English Garden is now thriving and requires no major attention from this project.

Across the whole garden there were several trees that had deteriorated over the years. In particular the birch trees were a pale shadow of their former glory, having succumbed to lichen covering a great deal of their branch system. These, along with some Magnolias on the Chinese Garden boundary, which were weak from the soil being too damp, and some camphor trees on the Japanese Garden boundary, which had become too top heavy and were causing light issues, all had to be removed. Prior to their removal, we worked with an ecologist to determine if we had any long-tailed bats roosting amongst the canopies - these delightful endemic mammals are a protected species. Fortunately, there was no evidence of bats being present so the go-ahead for the tree works was given and their stumps were ground out.

In the past few winters we have experienced worsening problems with the drainage in the sunken lawn and this has caused problems with the use of the lawn, particularly with events. So, a decision was made to dig up the lawn and investigate the topsoil. Digging down, the causes of our problems soon became apparent and were similar to the White Garden issues - poor quality and limited topsoil with a heavy presence of gley. Work is now underway to remove the poor-quality soil and to install drainage before installing quality topsoil and laying the new turf. The surrounding timber edging had badly deteriorated so this will also be replaced and improvements will be made to the irrigation system.

The irrigation across the whole garden is being overhauled and improved where necessary. This project also allowed us to check out the underground services like power and water and in particular the numerous metal covers located behind the red arch toilet block



which all required attention and raising to a level more suitable for access and servicing. Some sections of the pathways needed repair, and it goes without saying that with so much activity taking place, the pathways are taking a battering with vegetation and soil covering them. One of the final jobs will be a jet-wash and cleaning of all paths and the Millmead pavilion.

Along with the tree removals, some extensive pruning work was required and as mentioned some poor quality or over-sized shrubs needed replacing. Three of the garden's most notable trees, the English oak, the Parrotia and the beautiful weeping beech have all benefited from specialist pruning. Shrubs being replaced include Abutilon, Berberis, Camellia, and Rhododendron. With the clearance and plant removal works taking place, we will assess the soil quality and, where needed, quality soil, and compost will be used. In addition, some improvements to the two service paths that run alongside the Japanese and Chinese garden boundaries will take place, both of which have drainage issues.

Once the borders have all been replanted, the black metal hoops that lined the long border will be reinstalled. We've also decided to install additional new hoops for the smaller borders above the Sunken lawn and the perimeter of the lawn borders. This will help to tie in the garden areas and make a more completed scene.

To date the project is progressing well, bolstered by a great collaboration and team spirit amongst all of the teams in the Hamilton Gardens Unit, various contractors, and Wintec students. I know that spring seems a long way away but for us with so much exciting work to programme and execute it will soon arrive. Then, we will be delighted to re-open our beautiful English Garden to the public and to share our work.



Two new brick pillars have been built at the end of the border



Some extensive pruning work was required



The Long Border needed attention, with some of the shrubs having to be replaced



Glen Morris, left, and his offsider Luke Beaumont, pause in work on the Medieval Garden.



Glen Morris is heavily involved in the construction of the Medieval Garden

# BUILDING A LEGACY ONE PIECE AT A TIME

A self-described workaholic, the mechanically minded Glen Morris is the man with the hands-on knowledge who has been an integral part of the construction of several of the Hamilton Gardens gardens, including the under construction Medieval Garden. We interviewed Glen for this year's journal.

## Where were you born and raised?

In Hamilton, Frankton, and I went to Frankton School, but we moved up to Whangarei for a time as Dad worked in the refinery. Then we moved back to Hamilton and I went to Hamilton Boys' High School.

## How did you discover what you wanted to be?

Well, my dad was a builder and had us doing things from an early stage, so, obviously, that's why I've been mechanically minded ... making stuff and thinking about things since I was a kid. Our heritage is part of who you are, your body makeup.

## So, where did you and who did you learn your trade from?

Self-taught with what I do now but I first started a building apprenticeship, I'm a qualified builder. I've gone through the trade and have all the qualifications. I spent 10 years with a really cool guy, Neville Gavin. He came to Boys' High to get the top student, which I

was in building and drafting. So fell straight into the best job I could ever have. I spent 10 years one-on-one with a perfectionist. He was into mechanics. We built a house, we'd build the vanity, we'd hang the wallpaper. That's where it comes from that I work within the millimetre when making something ... it was being taught by a cabinet maker. It means I can make things accurate first time. I was taught to make a cutting list the old way. You don't just go, oh, I'll make this piece, and then I'll make this piece, and I'll make that piece. No, no, no. You set it out. Then you cut everything, and then you assemble it. It is important to be able to think in 3D, to get a process together and be able to get to an end result all the way through.

**How long have you been doing the type of work you do at the gardens?**

Statues, probably just over 10 years.

**Now, what type of work is it? Is it masonry?**

Well, it's manufacturing. Rather than calling it statue work. It is a manufacturing company. But we're designing and building everything. From the sculptures to the moulds. Normal businesses, you might employ a sculptor and then you might employ someone to make a mould, but we actually do the whole process. We can keep the accuracy and be true to what we're trying to make for our clients. You know, so that's what I was, when I was a builder, I'd design and build their house. So, I'd sit down with the client and listen to what they need. You'd design that within the design, and then because I designed it, then I'd go and build it. And so our projects always are what we set out to do. Working for the council as a client we try and recreate what has been designed.

**How long have you been involved doing the work here at the gardens?**

Probably eight years maybe.

**Which garden did you start on first?**

The Italian. That's how I got to work at the council. I realised that the Italian fountain was 30 millimetres out of level. And I approached them and said, would you like me to fix that? Then I got smaller jobs, maintenance, this and that. And then we obviously progressed, and I think the Tudor Garden was next. We probably did our first sculptures and one-off pieces there. After that it just kept growing and growing and growing.

**How many gardens have you worked on now?**

Everything after the Tudor Garden.

**Has the Medieval Garden taken the longest to build?**

It is the biggest project so far.

**Will the Baroque Garden be bigger?**

The Baroque Garden is larger in size, but I would still think the Medieval Garden will be bigger in the number of components that I need to make. The Baroque Garden may have more statues, less diversity.

**Why did you change from being a builder to doing the work you're doing now? Was it just a progression of you doing work and it evolved?**

Well, it has evolved. I've always been into sculpture. Then, a while ago, there used to be a company in Hamilton called Colonial Cement. An old couple there used to make statues, which I always used to go and have a look at because if you're interested in that sort of stuff, that's what you do. I obviously got to know them quite well, bought a lot of pieces off them, personal. They said they were selling up and I said, well, what are you doing with some of your moulds and I wouldn't mind having some so I could make them for myself at home - not thinking it could be a business. They sold me some moulds which sat around for years, then one weekend I pulled them out, had a plan and then didn't look back. It was organic, the way it evolved. I didn't push anything.

I was still building for years after those moulds were there. Then I started importing moulds from overseas because you can't buy them in New Zealand - not readily. So, then you start looking around the world for different things and now I've got over a thousand moulds. A lot of them are from overseas.

**What are one or two things that you really like, that bring you to work every day, that you like about the work?**

Being involved in the project. From start to finish. Solving problems. Using your mind to create these. I realised, being a builder, I wanted to design it. I wanted to be involved in the creation of something. Using your hands to create whatever you dream. And it's such an achievement. You know, anything I make in my workshop, I can see the sculpture and then I can see the process for this and this. Then the end result. Knowing that where it's come from is quite important. The second part of the equation is who it's for. It's very important, to me it's very personal. One of my best projects at the council was doing a sculpture for the Picturesque Garden. I was doing the sculpture for Ed Turner (a former president of Friends of Hamilton Gardens). Knowing the process that I was doing was for a certain person, for a purpose, is what I get up out of bed for. It's the people. It's the people and the industry. You know, I can get up and do a bird bath every day of my life. What do you achieve out of that? To me, I've got to create something. I've got to be involved in something. For me, for my heart and for my soul, it is to create things. The first place I got that really good feeling was the kids' playground. When we developed the little spaces for the kids' playground and seeing the kids play on it, that was heartwarming, you know, because here's this thing you've created and look at the joy you bring to all these kids.

**What is the trickiest sculpture, statue, work that you've had to do?**

Oh, it's all tricky. Like I say, we don't just do concrete work. No. Like we've just made some new doors for part of another garden, wardrobe

doors, the big yellow doors. They were made from timber and were failing because the timber was not fit for purpose. So, we made the doors out of solid fibreglass with steel frames. So it's not just working with concrete. I'll come up with a theory, a process and make something fit for purpose. It was a very complicated job, you know, working with something I'm not used to. But I'll think the way through it. I'll work out every process and I'll look for problems and, you know, solve it. Yeah. Another tricky project would have been the seats in the Egyptian Garden. Everyone turned that job down. And it finally come back around to me again, and I thought, okay, let's solve this problem.

**If you could name it, what is your favourite piece or garden and why?**

Well, it was the Egyptian. Then it was the Italian. Now it's the Medieval. It is the one you're working on at the time because that's where all your heart, your soul, your thought goes.

**Does the work here fully occupy you, or do you do other work elsewhere?**

I could and if I was able to, but I've got a really soft spot for the Hamilton Gardens and I'd like to grab whatever I can here. Sometimes, over the 8 years, the work here has not been enough, which is fine too. There's obviously funding challenges and, if things need to be done, I really like to do maintenance, which I normally do. But, obviously, at the moment, I haven't got that extra time to do any maintenance. So, we've been taken off the maintenance list, which is good. I requested that because I didn't want to not give my 100% to where I am. I've taken my website down at the moment. Clients have been told that I'm out of action for years.

**Who works with you?**

One worker, Luke Beaumont. He's been with me for over a year now too, trying to learn the systems. I need someone just with a bit of



education that is willing to listen and can absorb information, which is very hard because I don't think about things, it just happens.

**If you could briefly describe, what is the process for making and placing things like the stuff that you're putting into the Medieval Garden, as an example. You start with a design?**

Well, we start with a conversation from the client to get the overall concept 100%. I've got to do my investigation to make sure that what we're going to end up with is exactly what they want. Yes, there's a design, but then I need to go a step further back to look at the environment it's in and to make sure that I understand what they're trying to achieve from the result of what we're going to be creating. Then we'll come up with a process to make sure that what we're going to build is exactly right. You go backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards. Once you get to the sculpturing side of things, then you've got a clear vision. Once we've finished the sculptural, we're ready for more. Then you consult the client again. We can control everything, and the client gets exactly what they need.

**When you're not working on the gardens what do you do?**

I have a huge collection of things at home I am working on. For example, I buy old boats. I strip them down. I strip the trailers down. I rebuild the trailers. I rebuild the engines. I rebuild the legs. I do all the fibreglass work. I do the upholstery, do the wiring. I'll rebuild, renovate the boat.

**You don't like sitting still, do you?**

I've got to make something. I've got to keep making things. Luckily, which is unsung, I always say to my partner, you know, I can't do this without you. I have somebody and have a good relationship and have a good family that enables me to be me. I give whatever I do 110% and I know I've got a partner behind me and a family behind me that enables me to do this, which, you know, comes back to the people thing. This

is what I'm about. This is about the people around me that I engulf myself with and that makes me successful.

**Where do you get all your moulds from?**

I used to buy them from overseas, moulds that could be 80 years old. New moulds are very expensive. So I've taught myself, when moulds are that old and used or not very good, what to do. We fill it up with plaster and we get an original plaster casting from that mould, then I can re-sculpture it. Once we re-sculpture it, I'll make a new mould. What I'm doing is actually utilising that sculpture to get me 95% where I need to. I have then taught myself how to fix all the fine detail that has gone because of the age of the mould.

**What do you think are going to be the big challenges in the Baroque Garden?**

The size of the job and the time. It's just the number of components and the sculpturing. What I'm looking at, at the moment, with the Baroque Garden is how can we achieve that many sculptures in a short amount of time and for a cost? You know, if I had to sculpt every piece on that building, it wouldn't be feasible as a financial thing. I mean, the building will be as it needs to be.





The Go Eco Food Rescue team is tackling the challenge of food waste

# GROWING COMMUNITY FUTURES TOGETHER



**Go Eco Food Rescue makes great use of Hamilton Gardens seasonal abundance, reports the team at Go Eco.**

Imagine walking through a walled haven, overflowing with vibrant vegetables, aromatic herbs, and luscious fruits. The Kitchen Garden at Hamilton Gardens is not just a beautiful oasis; it's a powerful inspiration for visitors to cultivate their edible gardens wherever they live, and one of our favourite places to collect freshly harvested fruit and vegetables.

At Go Eco Food Rescue, we have the privilege of partnering with the Hamilton Gardens team to ensure that the seasonal abundance of the Kitchen Garden reaches those who need it most. In the past year alone, we've rescued 770 kilograms of fresh produce and delivered it to community centres across Hamilton, providing access to locally grown, nutritious kai for families and individuals.

This collaboration is part of a bigger story. Since our founding in 2014 as Kaivolution, Go Eco Food Rescue has tackled the challenge of food waste and turned it into a community solution. Perfectly good food that might otherwise end up in landfills is instead redistributed, reducing waste and creating meals for our region. Last year, we rescued over 457,766 kilograms of food, preventing more than 1.3

million kilograms of carbon emissions and generating over one million meals. Together, we're taking meaningful action against climate change while supporting people in our communities.

We're also working to increase the supply of fresh locally grown kai for communities by making it easier for people to share their backyard abundance and working with local growers to harvest. Our growing team of harvest helpers makes it possible for people to share the produce from their homes, care for their fruit trees, and reduce food waste at home.

Each small act of generosity, whether it's your time, produce, or financial support, ripples outward, sustaining a mission rooted in caring for both people and the planet. Together, we can transform oversupply and abundance into nourishment, cultivate connection, and grow hope where it's needed most.

Friends of Hamilton Gardens, your support is the soil in which abundant, thriving communities take root. Let's continue to nurture a future that values sharing, resilience, and collective well-being. Visit Go Eco or reach out at [hello@goeco.org.nz](mailto:hello@goeco.org.nz) to be part of this journey.





The remains of the hothouse are part of the outer gardens.



Left - The Russian Log Bell Tower is another highlight of the outer gardens.

# EXCLUSIVE OUTER GARDENS TOURS 2025

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**For Carol Webb a tour of the outer gardens was a revelation.**

The membership of The Friends of Hamilton Gardens were offered an exclusive opportunity to experience a tour of the outer gardens led by Gus Flower. Gus being the Horticultural and Operations Manager with over 20 years of experience at Hamilton Gardens. Only two tours, with strictly limited numbers, were planned for this year. First tour 27 March and another on 29 May. The cost of each tour was a donation of \$25 per person; with all proceeds going to support the development of the Gardens. The Baroque Garden is now on The Friends' radar with the Medieval Garden having reached the financial goal to finish the build.

I personally joined the March Tour and was surprised and delighted with the sight of the wonderful gardens that flourish outside of the Enclosed Gardens. All free to everyone to enjoy. Gus delighted us with his charm and amazing knowledge around the origins of these gardens. He was able to answer all sorts of questions raised (what, where, why, when and how?). Questions from 'when did that happen' to 'what's planned for the future'. His passion for the Gardens was evident throughout. He was also able to expertly answer questions about flora and fauna thriving in The Gardens.

Having access to the staff only pathways gave us all a better understanding of how the Gardens function and a greater appreciation of the 22 Gardeners who maintain Hamilton Gardens to a World Class standard.

Some of the Friends' long-term members on the tour, who had been visiting the gardens for decades, admitted that there were clearly still things that they had not seen or had no prior knowledge of. Some of the participants hung around after the tour to discuss and share conversations and memories of the Gardens.

Gus said we had not seen all the outside garden spaces and told us the Gardens were spread across over 40 hectares of land. He also told us that the second tour would cover areas not seen today. At that point, some of the participants immediately signed up for the second tour – including me!



HELP GROW THE MAGIC - MAKE A DONATION TODAY



As a valued Friend of Hamilton Gardens, you already know how special this place is – a world of beauty, imagination, and cultural inspiration.

Your support makes a real difference. Every donation, large or small, helps develop new gardens ensure visitors continue to experience the wonder of the Gardens for generations.

### *Want to make a lasting impact?*

We also welcome 'in memory of' donations and bequests, offering a meaningful way to honour loved ones or create a personal legacy.

To learn more about how your gift can help grow the Gardens, please contact the President of the Friends of Hamilton Gardens.

Ralph Evans - [info@fohg.org.nz](mailto:info@fohg.org.nz)

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# BONSAI TELLS A STORY OF WHERE A TREE HAS GROWN

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**Peter Mudie has a decades long interest in Bonsai, Tree in a Pot, a centuries old artform of nature.**

I first became interested in bonsai in the mid-1960s when I saw bonsai in a comic. My first tree was an oak grown from an acorn but, with no access to information on how to keep it alive, it did not last.

In 1989 I asked my future wife what hobbies she had and suggested she start one – she chose bonsai whilst living on the 9th floor of a block of flats. She joined our local club, the South Staffs Bonsai Society and soon had a collection of sticks in pots. I acted as chauffeur to some bonsai courses and helped with heavy wiring and lifting. I made the mistake of suggesting an improvement to one of her trees whilst she was at a workshop. When we got back home, I was given half her trees and told “you look after yours and don’t touch mine” – which has continued till this day.

With trees now needing development I also Joined the South Staffs and eventually we both served on the committee. We have attended numerous conventions and had workshops with top European and Australasian demonstrators such as Dan Barton, Salvatore Liporace and Tony Bebb to help improve our knowledge and techniques.

Moving to New Zealand in 2005 meant us leaving over 200 trees to be sold/given away. Upon our arrival here we joined the Hamilton Bonsai Club and have served on the club committee in numerous roles. I have also served on the committee of the New Zealand Bonsai Association including as president of both organisations.

We all know what a bonsai is – it translates as Tree in a Pot, but if you take that literally then that applies to every tree or shrub you buy from a garden centre, so we modify that to Tree in a Pot, that has had specific techniques applied to it so the tree gives the impression of being a large tree in a landscape (minus the actual landscape).

Although considered a Japanese artform, it was developed from about 1200 C.E. when the Japanese brought back from China the much older Buddhist artform of Penjing (Tray Landscape) which Peter Sergel has always wanted to have in the Chinese garden but our experiences over the years so far have ended with the theft of several trees.

Techniques used include the use of pruning of both branches and roots at the appropriate time to generate a fine ramified branch

structure and a fine ramified root structure. Aluminium wire ranging from 1mm to 8mm diameter may be used to help in the repositioning of branches to give an aesthetically pleasing shape as well as ensuring that foliage has access to light to enable photosynthesis. This wire is removed once it has done its job, and the branch has set in its new position. Leaving the wire on for too long results in scarring of the bark which is very noticeable on thin barked species such as Maples but less so on thick rugged barked Pines, Junipers and Cedars. Not all species are suitable for wiring as their branches are very brittle when more than one year old - such as Crab Apples - trying to bend these with wire will see you reaching for the super glue.

These techniques are not cruel – with the proper species a bonsai may live to be over 400 years old and there are a number of well documented examples in both China and Japan of trees reaching this age. Whilst we were still living in the UK, the city of Omiya in Japan gifted the city of Birmingham a 250-year-old Juniper for display at the National Bonsai Collection held in the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

The overall style of a bonsai tells a story of where the tree has grown, is it a mountain tree clinging to a cliff, does it sit in a paddock surrounded by grazing animals or on a riverbank overhanging the water? Has it been affected by any external factors such as strong winds coming from one direction such as on the coast in Otago, a landslip, animal predation (possums) or storm damage? The species we use include both natives such as pōhutukawa, totara, manuka, coprosma,



The Hamilton Bonsai Club runs beginners courses, regular meetings and workshops



Pohutukawa is one native species that can be used for bonsai

corokia and kowhai as well as exotics like chinese elm, junipers, pines, cedars and maples along with many more with sizes ranging from 10cm (including the pot) to over 1m tall.

So where do we get our raw material from? Growing from seed or cuttings can provide us with material for a very small tree but if we want a medium sized or larger tree then unless we can plant the seedlings or cuttings out into a growing on bed for 5 or 6 years then we need to find some larger material to start with. Garden centres can provide material for small to medium trees but the range of species can be a bit limited. For larger material we normally rely on collecting trees, either from the garden of a friend or from the wild. Collecting trees from the wild, usually called yamadori, can only be done with the permission of the landowner. In the case of DOC land once permission

has been obtained, we only collect non-native species such as wilding pines. Collected material is usually put straight into a training box and left alone for a year to recover.

Once you have your raw material then it's time to examine the tree to decide on a suitable style for the tree. The tree will tell you what style to use rather than you deciding on a style you want and forcing the tree into that style. Careful examination of the root flare, trunk thickness, trunk taper and shape as well as the number and placement of the major branches can take quite some time before you finally settle on a style and start work. Development can take a number of years and the tree is normally repotted several times into smaller and smaller pots as we prune the roots to remove the thick heavy roots over time before it goes into the final display pot. I have trees which have been in training for 20 years and it will be a few more years yet before they are ready for display. During this time you may decide to change the style as you work on the tree as the ramification of the branch and root structure develops.

The final display pot for the tree also requires careful consideration as there are choices to make on the shape, size and colour of the



A bonsai specimen in the Japanese Garden



pot as well as the final position of the tree within the pot. Coniferous trees such as Pines, Junipers and Cedars are usually in a dark brown unglazed pot whilst colourful species such as maples and azalea are in brighter glazed pots. The main aim is for the pot to complement the shape and species of the tree and should not be distracting.

Many people have unsuccessfully tried bonsai and their trees have died. At our annual show we quite often get comments along these lines. Gentle questioning usually gives a common theme of the failure of the tree to thrive, namely the tree is kept indoors (they are TREES) and/or they forgot to water it. Bonsai are some of the most pampered plants around. A regular check on the tree shows when it needs watering. This may be daily during the growing season and even during light rain we will water our trees as the foliage acts as an umbrella and keeps the roots dry. Fertilisation is done weekly or fortnightly during the growing season. The correct growing medium is used depending on the tree species and the microclimate in your garden and may differ from tree to tree in your collection, with some species requiring a more freely draining mixture like Pines whilst others prefer a more moisture retentive mix such as Swamp Cypress or Kahikatea.

To ensure even growth on the tree it is good practice to rotate them 180 degrees every week so both sides get the benefit of the sunlight. Getting to know the species of your bonsai and where they originate from allows you to provide the best possible condition for it to grow. This knowledge allows you to position your bonsai to get the right amount of light. You need to think "is it an under canopy tree such as a Chinese maple which grows well in dappled shade or is it a mountain top tree which grows in full sunlight such as a Mugo pine?"

Displaying bonsai is an art form in itself, with each tree having its own space and being displayed on a stand with an accompanying 'accent'

plant or Suiseki (viewing stone). Small bonsai (Mame, less than 10cm including the pot, or Shohin, less than 20cm from the top of the pot to the top of the tree) are displayed as sets of three or more on a multi-level stand, each small tree still sitting on its own stand within the larger display.

Hamilton Bonsai Club is considered to be one of the best in NZ and our annual show is the largest annual show in New Zealand, attracting visitors and traders from all over North Island with some visitors from South Island as well. 2025 will see our 30th consecutive annual show to be held at the Hamilton Gardens Pavilion so come along and have a chat to us. The club runs beginner's courses, regular meetings and workshops to help members to grow their skills and help them to develop better, healthier trees.

If you want to know more, come along to one of our meetings or visit our show in October. You can find more details on our website or Facebook page.





# ROSE CARE FOR THE HOME GARDENER

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**Eileen Wilcox is a consulting rosarian for the NZ Rose Society and shares some of her knowledge with readers.**

Roses are unquestionably one of the most popular flowers in the world and have been cultivated for thousands of years. Fossilised forms prove that roses and lilies have existed on earth for millions of years. New Zealand, especially the Waikato, has a very suitable climate for growing roses.

There are various forms of roses - bush roses, climbers, ramblers, species roses, shrubs and miniature type roses. Roses come in a wide colour range except for blue however there are many shades of lilac, mauve and purple.

**Planting** – is traditionally done in winter when bare rooted roses are available at garden outlets or ordered from rose nurseries direct. Roses are also available in pots later in the season when they are in bloom.

When purchasing look for plants with three or four strong canes, there is usually some spindly growth so prune this off cleanly at the crown. If you cannot plant straight away keep plants moist and do not let the roots dry out.

**Site** - morning sun is best and away from strong winds, a free draining fertile soil is important.

Before purchasing new roses prepare the soil ready for planting. Dig a large hole and work in good quality compost, old, rotted farm manure if you are lucky enough to source this, sheep/chicken pellets and a handful of blood and bone. Pre-planting is the only time to get fertiliser down under the root zone.

Tease out roots and place them over a mound in the middle of the hole, fill in and firm in and water. Make sure that the crown is above the soil surface. If a stake is required (standard roses) get this firmly in place before planting. Established roses will transplant well - if you need to move a rose to another site, prune the bush back and plant as above.

**Pruning** – why do we need to prune? The aim of pruning is to remove the dead and diseased canes to create and maintain a healthy framework of viable canes that will produce a good crop of blooms later in the season. Roses are shrubs therefore do not have a central trunk. Growth is by way of stems or canes which grow from the crown.

Old canes become thick and woody which will impede the sap flow to the flowering shoots and leaves. The spent canes are often a dull greyish colour, new canes by contrast are green or reddish brown and are viable for three or four years until they become less vigorous.

Mid-July is the optimum time to prune in the Waikato. Use clean sharp tools, a good quality pair of secateurs and a pruning saw. When removing old spent canes saw these off cleanly at the crown, don't leave any stubs. A rule of thumb is to remove two thirds of the rose bush. Prune canes back to an outward facing eye as this will be the direction the new spring growth will follow. Cuts should be clean and made at a 45° angle about half a centimetre above the bud – sloping

backwards to stop the water collecting on the bud. After pruning give the crown a gentle scrub with a soft bristled brush to remove any debris and crusty old bark.

A correctly pruned rose bush should resemble an open umbrella and well pruned climbing roses should be fan shaped and well secured to a strong frame for support.

Aim to prune your roses on a dry day to prevent silverleaf infection. If roses are left unpruned, they will survive but after a few years the growth will become tangled, weaker and produce smaller blooms.

**Feeding /fertilisers** - Apply early September, November and February (if required). Use a suitable rose fertiliser with an NPK rating of roughly 10-5-13 – these figures should be printed on the fertiliser pack or bag. Always follow the manufacturer's guidelines for application rates and do not apply more than what is recommended - "more is not better".

Plants take up fertiliser through the soil solution so always fertilise before rain or water in well. Never apply fertilisers to dry soil. From early October onwards apply a good layer of mulch to suppress weeds and to retain soil moisture. Use an organic mulch where possible.

Soil pH for roses should be around 6.5, pH meters are available at some garden outlets. For heavy soils use gypsum to help break up clay and improve soil drainage, this works wonders and is pH neutral.

**Spraying** – a winter spray programme is important, use a copper spray which is a good protectant spray against downy mildew that arrives with the onset of spring humidity. Copper can be applied once a month over the winter period. Lime Sulphur is a useful winter spray but will stain paintwork so use carefully and do not spray within a three week period of applying a copper spray.

Aphids appear during spring, a weak solution of soapy water with a few drops of oil added is a simple control if used regularly. Finger



and thumb control also works well but maybe not for the squeamish. Encourage beneficial insects into your garden by growing a wide range of plants and don't blanket spray, only target the plants that are infected with aphids.

**Summer Care-** the first flush of blooms is from late October to late November and once this is over deadheading is recommended. This is simply to remove the spent blooms, always cut just above the first five leaf leaflet to an outside facing eye to ensure new growth. There are no eyes above the first set of five leaves. Deadheading encourages more blooms thus prolonging the flowering season. Roses generally have three flushes of blooms here in the Waikato.

During the warmer summer weather water well, a good deep watering once a week is by far the best practice rather than a daily sprinkle which mostly evaporates and is a complete waste of our valuable water supply.

During the summer months two diseases can cause problems - rust and powdery mildew. Both can be treated with a garden sulphur product, again follow the manufacturer's instructions for application rates. Rust spores are bright orange pustules visible on the undersides of the leaves. When applying a control spray apply this to the underside of the foliage. Powdery mildew is a fungal disease that produces a white powdery growth on the surface of upper leaves and stems. The plants look as though they have been dusted with talcum powder. Roses grown in very sheltered environments often succumb to these two summer problems.

By the end of March it is time to cease deadheading, just leave the roses to form hips (seed heads) this will help to harden up the canes to enable the plants to survive the colder winter conditions.

Roses will flower from late October to early May, yes, they have thorns but most give an outstanding garden display and some produce that delightful perfume that we associate with these much loved flowers.





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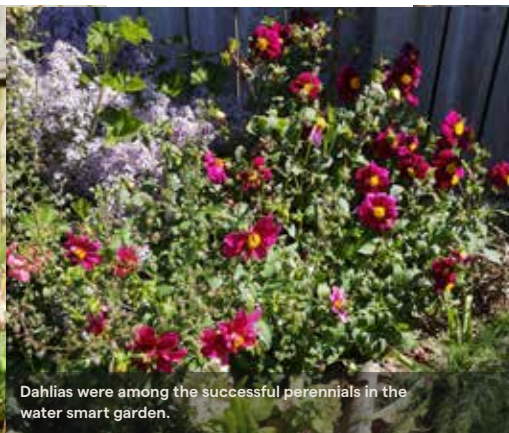
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Dahlias were among the successful perennials in the water smart garden.



The decision was made to downsize the vegetable growing patch.

# NOTES FROM JUDY'S GARDEN

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Judy Holdsworth

“The more one gardens, the more one learns, and the more one learns, the more one realizes how little one knows.” - Vita Sackville-West

Late spring last year I made the decision to downsize growing vegetables. I always seemed to have too many, even after giving away more than we could eat and preserve. So, all the remaining overripe crops came out and a new learning curve began.

I had been concerned about the amount of water people seemed to be using to keep their gardens alive and wondered how to grow a water smart garden. We are in an unusual position where our water is on a trickle feed system with a water meter on our boundary. The water goes to a holding tank and is then pumped to the house. This means I had to think about how to try something with only a limited water source available.

The site was long, approx. 35 m by 2m with a narrow driveway down the middle and the same on the other side with 2m high fences. It was a sun trap with no shade, and I could only garden there early morning or evening.

### Some criteria were needed to get started

Plants needed to be:

- Able to cope with little or no water
- Able to cope with the heat
- Attractive to bees and butterflies
- Free or low-cost in case the experiment was a failure

I would only use homemade compost or decomposed leaf litter or grass clippings – no artificial fertilizer.

No spraying would happen.

Minimal staking would be allowed.

Low-cost plants would be sourced from plants I already had in pots or bought from plant stalls or from cuttings gifted to me or plants I had raised from seeds.

I also decided that the plants would initially get water when planted to get them established and then just rely on rainfall. Despite the drought since January, they have continued to thrive.

So, I took great delight in getting it all planted mid to late October 2024, weeding in the early hours of dawn to escape the heat of the day.

Some vegetable plants were included among all the flowers, enough for a small family.

2 apple trees, raspberry canes and rhubarb were already there and have been subjected to the same regime with excellent results.

Some of the successful perennials I used were a variety of Salvias, Dahlias, Irises, Gaura, Silene, Trachelium, Boltonia, Asters, Verbascum, Lavender, Rosemary, Tweedia and Sedums.

Annuals that I had available and planted included Sunflowers, Lupins, Marigolds, Cosmos, Zinnias, Nicotiana, Poppies and Salvias.

A big plus has been having a picking garden and the pleasure of giving away lots of bouquets to friends and family.

Will I continue with it? Yes, and I have already been collecting seeds ready to continue next season.

The more I learn the more I realize how little I know.

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