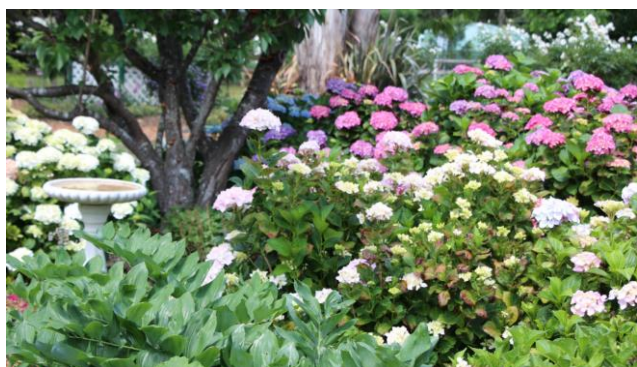


OPERCULUM – DECEMBER 2016

SHBG.COM.AU * admin@shbg.com.au

Hydrangea Garden Walk

On the weekend of 10th & 11th December, three adjoining gardens at Burradoo were opened for our first summer Open Gardens event, the *Hydrangea Garden Walk & Plant Sale*. It proved to be an outstanding success with over 500 people visiting the gardens over the weekend. Thank you to owners Tony Davis & Maureen Purtell, Don & Vivian Brown and Liz Nicolls.



The SHBG Plant Growers Group supplied an amazing array of quality plants for sale. Hydrangeas and many other summer flowering plants were eagerly sought out by gardeners near and far. The SHBG PGG, co-ordinated by Di Grant, is developing an excellent reputation for offering varied and high quality plants. Congratulations to all involved.

With garden entry and plant sales, this very successful event raised almost \$17,000 for the SHBG – an excellent outcome for all concerned.

The tapestry of colour in the hydrangea bed proved to be a photographer's dream.



Garden Clubs visit SHBG

The Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens is attracting interest from garden clubs near and far. Recent visiting groups included the Graduates Garden Club Killara on 20th October and the Nimmitabel Garden Club on 24th October. They were keen to see the progress already in place and to hear of the plans for the further development of the Gardens.

Both groups offered thanks for the hospitality they were shown on their visits.

Photo shows visitors from the Nimmitabel Garden Club with SHBG's Noelene Bailey.



SHBG is proud to be able to showcase the Gardens and many visitors find it especially exciting to visit at this early stage of the long-term development. Chris Blaxland, an SHBG Director and a member of the Friends Committee, has initiated training for people to be *SHBG Guides*. A pool of volunteers will be on call to greet visiting groups, to show them the work that has already been achieved on the site, and to highlight plans for the future development of the Gardens.

As part of the induction process, interested Friends were also instructed in the use of the defibrillator. This Zoll AED Plus automated external defibrillator was purchased using funds supplied under the Wingecarribee Council Community Assistance Scheme. Hopefully this device, and the skills to operate it, will never be required but it is good to know that it is available to help in an emergency before the arrival of paramedics.



It is envisaged that over time, conducted tours of the Gardens will become a community service that we can offer on a regular bases. Eventually tours may be offered to special interest and school groups. Engendering a broad interest in the development of the Gardens and long lasting affiliation with the Gardens is an important objective.

Carols in the Gardens

The inaugural *Carols in the Gardens* was held on the evening of Sunday 11th December. Undeterred by the cool evening and threatening skies, a group of Friends, guests and community gathered on the grassy slope of the natural amphitheatre to be lead in the singing of Christmas carols by *Women of Note*.



Once the entertainment began, the cool evening was soon forgotten as *Women of Note* jollied us along with a delightful repertoire of lesser known carols, as well as some old favourites, to which the audience was invited to sing along to.



Near the conclusion of the event a very jovial Santa came prancing down the hill to the delight of all present.



Assisted by his helper, he presented a little gift to each of the children who excitedly gathered around him.

Judy Keast, from the Friends Committee, continued to sell raffle tickets, in between a little dancing. Special thanks go to Kathryn Jeffrey who was of great help to Judy in amassing the three bountiful prizes on offer, and who joined into the Christmas spirit with Judy on the night to sell tickets. The sale of tickets raised over \$1,400. Well done, Judy and Kathryn.

The lucky prize winners were, Dawn Davis, Robyn Baker and Annie Jones.



If there had been a prize for best Christmas Outfit, Tristram Fieldhouse would have been a finalist!

MC Grant Blanchard closed the evening wishing a *Merry Christmas* to everyone.



Autumn Gardens – Call for Volunteers

Next year's SHBG Autumn Gardens & Plant Fair will be held on Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd of April 2017. In addition to all the work already being done in planning and getting plants ready for sale, volunteers will be needed on the weekend to set up, man the 6 open gardens, run the plant stalls, assist customers at the Plant Fair, sell SHBG merchandise and manage the parking. We need to have around 50 people on duty at all time.

If each volunteer is prepared to help for a morning or an afternoon on one of the 2 days then we need around 200 volunteers. Can you help? Please *Save the Date* and look out for the Volunteer Registration Form that we will shortly make available on the SHBG website. Thanking you in advance for your participation.

Large Grant ... to help find more

The continued development the SHBG will need substantial funding. Site earthworks and the building of the Visitors Centre will involve very large capital expenditure. We have already received a number of grants and raised a great deal of money through the efforts of Friends, but now more is needed.

SHBG is pleased to have received a very generous grant of \$100,000 from the Ramsey Foundation. This money has been, in part, used to secure the services of marketing and corporate sponsorship specialist, Sara Morton-Stone.



Sara has held similar roles with the Red Cross and with Achieve Australia. She has recently moved to the Highlands and will work from her home office. She can be contacted through the SHBG office.

Ramsey Foundation's Deputy Chairman, Peter Evans, presents a cheque to SHBG Chairman Charlotte Webb with Sara Morton-Stone.

Plant Growers Group

The Plant Growers Group (PGG) continues to provide support to the Gardens through the production of plants for use in the Gardens and to sell. The PGG efforts were justly rewarded at the Hydrangea Walk



selling around 1,000 plants and raising almost \$11,000 for the SHBG. Well done to all involved.

The group will now focus on preparing plants for sale at the SHBG Autumn Gardens & Plant Fair. With contributions from other individual growers, it is expected that around 4,000 plants will be offered for sale at the April 2017 Plant Fair.

Being part of this team is a great opportunity to share your skills and expertise, and have some fun, with other Southern Highlands gardeners while making a material contribution to the SHBG fundraising efforts.

SHBG Ltd – Annual General Meeting

Members of the company attended the AGM held on 21st November. The Chairman's Report and the Annual Report & Financial Statements for 2016 are available on the SHBG website at shbg.com.au/about/reports

Friends of the SHBG

The Friends provides an opportunity for those within the local and wider community to demonstrate support for the establishment of a Botanic Garden.

The Friends of SHBG Committee includes Chris Webb (Chairman) along with Lyn Barrett, Chris Blaxland, Ian Dwyer, Shandra Egan, Susan Hand, Judy Keast and Peter Scott. Email: friends@shbg.com.au

Working Bees

The SHBG relies on volunteers to carry out regular maintenance in the Gardens and to help prepare the plant stock. There are regular working bees and volunteers may also be called on for special projects.

First Tuesday of the Month: 10am – Noon



Bring comfortable clothes, hat and gloves. Enjoy a friendly chat over morning tea. There will be NO Working Bee in January, but we will meet on February 7th and March 7th.

SHBG – Grants & Donations

The Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens seeks grants and donations as an important source of funding the development of the Gardens. SHBG is grateful to the grant support from all levels of government as well as gifts from individuals, commercial and community organisations. Many of these supporters have been highlighted in past editions of *Operculum*.

A recent gift was from Earthcare who have donated 3 x 20 litre drums of "Seasol" and 3 x 20 litre bags of "Powerfeed". These items will be put to good use. Thank you to Earthcare.

We also wish to recognize the long-term support of the Bowral Co-op who have provided financial support, garden products and introductions to suppliers.

In October, a grant of \$2,000 was received from the ClubGRANTS program. This money has been applied to meet some of the cost of installing a shade sail over the Pioneers Square adjacent to the Supporters Centre.

Site Development

Apart from the spring and summer growth of the already planted trees, there have been some dramatic physical changes to the Gardens over the last few months.

There is now a stabilised decomposed granite path that, when completed, will lead visitors from the entry gates, past the Autumn Woodland and Oak Rondel and then onwards to the pedestrian access gate close to Tony Emmett's *Man in the Universe* sculpture.



Earthworks are required to complete a small section of this path, but the section already completed gives a good indication of how it will enhance the journey through the Gardens.

The Oak Rondel includes a circle of pavers – some already inscribed – surrounding a circle of compressed granite.

Inscribed Pavers – Now Available

Would you like to have an inscribed paver laid in the Oak Rondel? This opportunity is again available for a strictly limited period. Details at shbg.com.au.

The seating in The Rondel provides a place to sit and contemplate the Gardens. The Rondel is framed by a hedge of pendulous boxus (*Buxus sempervirens* "Pendula") and the large oaks (*Quercus robur* "Fastigiata") will develop over time to provide a cool area in summer.



One of the other projects underway, but not yet completed, is to install large display signs detailing the concept plan and welcoming visitors to the site. This will include signs to explain the concept plan of a "Journey through Landscape" and how this might be portrayed in specific areas. The signs will identify: the *Arrival* styled after an elegant estate entry; the *Town Garden* (*Urbe*

Hortum) and parterre garden; the *Country* (*Terra Hortus*) through the meadows and woodland; and the *Region* (*Hortis Paradisi*) through the native woodland and the Chain of Ponds.

Another change visitors will have noticed is that the Pioneers Square is now covered by a large shade sail. This provides protection from the heat of the sun – and even some shelter from the rain.



But the major project for 2017 is yet to come. The results may unfortunately not be seen for some time, but the next step is

to start developing plans for the multi-purpose Visitors Centre. It is proposed that the centre will contain the visitor information desk, display areas, admin offices, research facilities, a horticulture library, conference rooms and a cinema. The centre will also offer community facilities including meeting rooms and a café / restaurant supported by a commercial kitchen. While funding and approval may not yet be assured, it is important that the *concept* now be turned into a *plan*.

An important step in the plan is an architectural competition for the design of the Visitors Centre. Retired architect Phillip Taylor is guiding the board in selecting a coordinator for this process.

Botanic Gardens – Wellington, NZ.

SHBG Friend Susan Hand visited Wellington in late October, and took the opportunity to visit the Wellington Botanic Gardens. She has written this report.

The Wellington Botanic Gardens cover a 25-hectare (62 acres) site between the Wellington districts of Kelburn and Thorndon near central Wellington. As the site is hilly we elected to catch the cable car from Cable Car Lane, off Lambton Quay in the Wellington CBD, to the top at Kelburn. This allowed us to amble gently downhill through this unique landscape of protected native forest, conifers, specialised plant collections and sensational displays of perennials & annual plants.

The Garden's history dates from 1844 when the NZ Company instructed Colonel William Wakefield to set aside a 5.26 ha strip of land that was covered in dense podocarp forest including rimu, totara and matai as a buffer zone between the developing town and rural activities.

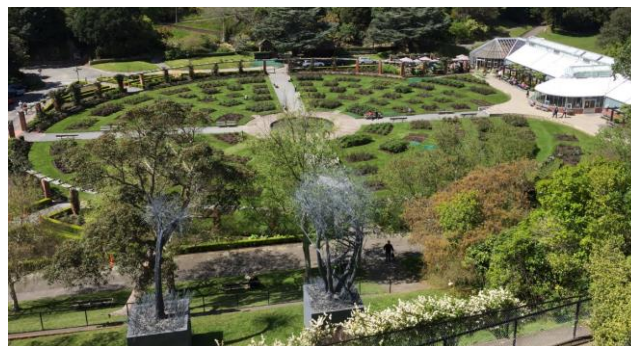
By 1851 the Wellington Horticultural Society had convinced the Government of the day to designate the area as a botanical reserve. The Act to establish the Botanic Gardens was subsequently introduced and in 1868 the Crown Grant was signed that established the Gardens. (That's 17 years from idea to reality. SHBG has taken a few years less!) At this stage the New Zealand Institute managed the gardens and planted many conifers species, some of which can still be seen today. This planting was part of a programme to import plant species to assess their potential economic benefit for the colony. The Wellington

City Council has managed the Botanic gardens since 1891.

Today, the Gardens is a varied, beautiful and serene spot for locals and visitors.

Unfortunately, our October visit meant it was too early in the season to enjoy the hydrangeas in bloom, but a walk through the Hydrangea Gully whetted my appetite for a return visit during summer. In particular, I would like to see the Hydrangea Mathilda Gutges, *H. involucrata Hortensis*, *H. macrophylla* Pia Mina and *apera Robusta*. (As an aside, all but the last one were on sale at the SHBG Hydrangea Walk weekend.)

The Lady Norwood Rose Garden is not to be missed. It contains some 3,000 roses covering 300 varieties. As well, there is a heritage collection of roses from the Regency and Victorian periods. (*Photo below shows Green Island sculptures, rose garden, Begonia House, gift shop and café as seen from the Herb Garden.*)



What impressed me most about the rose collection was the health and vigour of the plants. The Wellington Botanic Gardens claims to be a leader in using an integrated pest management program ("Bad Bugs Banished") to minimize the use of toxic sprays to ensure the health and growth of pest-free plants.

With minimal toxic spraying, many beneficial insects such as lacewings, ladybirds and cockroaches (who love to dine on aphids), hoverflies, praying mantis and predatory mites and spiders move into the area. The Gardens "grow" its own supply of good bugs to be released when needed.

There are many impressive collections in this garden including the James Hector Pinetum. This relatively recent addition to the Gardens is to not only honour James Hector, the "Father of the Gardens", but the significance of pines to the New Zealand economy.

The Wellington Botanic Gardens, a *Garden of National Significance*, is worth another visit!

For the Diary

- Working Bees as noted above
- **Autumn Gardens & Plant Fair: 22nd & 23rd April**

More Information & News: www.shbg.com.au

Contact SHBG: admin@shbg.com.au

Operculum Editor: Susan Hand skhand@ozemail.com.au

Next Operculum to be published in February.

The deadline for the receipt of articles and photos is 5pm on Wednesday 8th February 2017