

## **PART THREE ■ Plant Collections**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Gisborne's Botanical Gardens presently includes three sister city gardens (Japanese, Australian, and Palm Desert), the New Zealand Bush garden, the riverside garden, a collection of mature specimen trees, the rose bed, and raised flower bed on the corner of Roebuck Road and Aberdeen Road. A number of smaller gardens can also be found around the reserve.

The existing Botanical Gardens' gardens and collections are shown in the Plant Plan (Appendix 3) and the Plant Inventory (appendix 4). The Botanical Gardens has been separated in to 19 plant zones.

Proposed development, consistent with the concept plan (appendix 5) will require changes or even removal of some existing gardens. Key changes include the removal of the riverside garden (plants will be re-planted on site or elsewhere where possible), the raised flower bed will be removed (the historic bricks should be recycled), the rose bed will be removed, the cacti-collection will be upgraded consistent with an authentic 'Palm Desert' collection. New garden collections will be developed, which include: the New Zealand Garden Walk, the 'meeting place', the Maze Garden, the Bog Garden and the Café Terrace.

The existing gardens are as follows:

### **3.2 Australian Garden**

The first of the sister city gardens, the Australian Gardens was commenced in 1997. This saw the complete redevelopment of northwestern corner of the Botanical Gardens. What was originally a site inhabited by a large Gum Tree and a set of stairs (connecting the northeastern corner of the Botanical Gardens to Roebuck Road) and a large area of under utilized open space was transformed into a meandering area of pathways leading to seating areas and a central court yard below the Roebuck Road stairway.



Bridge entrance to the gardens.

Either side of the meandering pathways was slowly developed, cultivated and planted with representative plant from the Australian landscape. While initially difficult to obtain, seedlings were eventually grown and planted on either side of the pathways. A coloured chip seal was used to give the pathways a distinctive Australian look. Low plastered wall the colour of Australian red rock were constructed to create a distinctive court yard at the Roebuck Road



In spring of 1998 silt clearance from under the Roebuck Road bridge began. Using the excavated silt as a base for the Australian gardens in the inter-tidal zone of the Taruheru River, contractors were employed to reshape the dumped soil to represent an oval shaped outcrop.

Numerous Australian plants were donated to the gardens by local Gisborne people, including a large Bungalow Palm. A number of keen

volunteer gardeners expressed interest early on in the development of the concept plans. Their interest led to hands on planting and cultivation of the garden area. This interest resulted in the establishment of the Friends of the Botanical Gardens in 1998. This voluntary group's aims were to foster interest, awareness and development of the gardens.



northwestern corner of the Botanical Gardens alongside the Taruheru River and the Roebuck Road street frontage. This garden is situated in the Taruheru River and the Roebuck Road street frontage. Work developing the garden with commenced in 1997. The garden was developed around a large gum tree, a site characteristic of that area of the reserve. This gum tree has become a central feature of the Australian Garden along the 'Rain Catcher', a unique cast bronze sculpture gifted by the Macedon Shire Range Council in 1999.

For the integrity of the gardens it is important that plants are natives or popular species of the origin being portrayed. Appropriate Australian plants were sourced from a nursery north of Auckland. Local people from around the district also donated appropriate plants including a large Bungalow Palm. An irrigation system has been installed to improve the hydration of the soil during the warm summer months.

Council has established a viewing platform off the Roebuck Road street frontage and Jara seats. The seats, whose shape represent that of the boomerang have become a landmark feature of the Australian Garden. Another feature is the jetty extending out over the Taruheru River.

### 3.3 Japanese Garden

The Japanese Garden has been developed around an existing pond. The pond is the focal point of the Japanese Garden. Plans were completed in 1997 for the first stages of development. Landscape preparation for the garden required redesigning the island in the centre of the pond. Creating the Japanese Garden required a landscaping work including, new plantings using plants native to Japan, vegetation clearance, laying of weed mat, and importing and the placing of large focal rocks and spreading of white chip.



Mondo Grass (traditional Japanese grass) has been planted around the periphery of the island. Specimen plantings within the garden include a Japanese 'Black Pine' (*Pinus thunbergii*) and a 'Weeping cherry' tree. These have been strategically planted within the island, enhancing the Japanese character of the garden.



The backdrop to the lake consists of various Japanese native flora and common exotic species to Japan, including a row of cherry trees that have been planted along the Aberdeen Road frontage. Further design techniques have been the construction of the 'stepping stone' bridge. This represents the Japanese theme of the "flight of the goose".

Visiting dignitaries from Nonoichi donated a traditional Japanese Lantern. Other interesting features include the bamboo water feature. The Japanese Lantern was presented to Council in 1999 and is a feature of the garden.

The whole of the Japanese Garden is a work of art, with features such as the "father" rock placed as Japanese gardening etiquette necessitates.



### 3.4 Palm Desert Garden and Cacti Collection



The Palm Desert Garden has a formal entrance (unlike the other two Sister City Gardens). On one side of the Palm Desert Garden is a formal archway introducing the garden and informing the visitor that they are in effect entering a new garden environment or a 'different room'. This in effect gives the Palm Desert Garden a distinctive feel and atmosphere. The garden was officially opened on 30 August 2000.

The formidable entrance way is complete with brass lettering, a low plastered wall, rocks and pathways. Plantings have begun using aloes, succulents and yucca trees around the inside of the garden wall. A seed bank of Palm Desert natives is being established. Palm Desert natives include agaves, succulents, and cacti. A large ponytail palm was relocated to the entrance of the palm desert garden from another area of the gardens and two donated yucca trees frame the second entrance.



A 35-rock artwork is one of the focal points of the garden, alongside the Greig cacti collection. The rock work is a gift from the Palm Desert Council, and is the creation of Californian artist Mike Watlin. The artist used "mountain-like" rocks which reflect Palm Desert's colour and need to be big and sharp. He sourced these rocks from the Te Puke quarry.

The Palm Desert Garden includes a cacti collection displayed inside a glass house. The Cacti were bequeathed to Council in the 1970's by the Greig family.

This collection represents Cacti mostly found in Africa. Due to the height of existing cacti, some of these are out-growing the glass house.

The cacti collection should expand to include Cacti from the west Coast of North America and Palm Desert. The glass house is now over 30 years old and requires on-going maintenance due to vandalism and general wear and tear. This facility requires upgrading to enhance access and display of the cacti collection.

### 3.5 New Zealand Native Bush Garden

Although not a garden in the formal sense, the New Zealand Bush Garden enables visitors to view, from a raised timber walkway, some of New Zealand's temperate forest plants, mainly from the warmer North Island. This walk features both high canopy and understory species and highlights the importance of conserving this country's precious natural bush areas.

Trees were first planted to create this bush area between 1915 and 1920. Plants featured include the iconic NZ kauri, rimu, kahikatea, totara and nikau palm, plus a range of shrubs, ferns and lesser known trees. The undergrowth is relatively open, with predominant species such as kawakawa and occasional small broadleaved shrubs, ferns and herbs. It is planned to introduce the epiphytic kiekie in a damper part of the bush if possible.

While there are several highly significant natural forest remnants around the Gisborne plains and closer foothills, much of the previously forested area has been extensively cleared and drained for pastoral farming and agriculture. The New Zealand Bush Garden provides within the city an opportunity in all weathers to see a range of this area's native plants close up.

A feature of this bush planting, now approaching a century old, is a small natural pool fed by a perennial spring. It is planned to enhance this area with more NZ groundcover species.

The New Zealand Bush Garden also provides a habitat for a range of free-flying native and introduced bird species. Native birds to be seen at different times of the year include bellbird, fantail, kereru, tui and grey warbler.

### 3.6 Riverside Garden

From the children's playground, a relaxing walk can be had along the sealed pathway or lawn beside the Taruheru River edge towards the Australian Garden. On the way there are garden and group specimen plantings backed by wetland and placid waterway.

The mild climate of Gisborne permits the growing of a range of perennial plants, which can be seen in various garden combinations that originated in the last days under the old Gisborne City Council parks and reserves gardening staff. The enthusiasm of the now contracted gardening staff has been behind the continued development of this area.



Herbaceous plants from around the world have been brought together in the River Edge Garden and include evergreen and deciduous varieties. A mix of autumn and spring flowering bulbs bring colour throughout the year and height is provided by New Zealand's ti kouka, *Cordyline australis*, and a cluster of *Trachycarpus fortunei* palms as well as shrubby *Pseudopanax*.

Genera to be seen in the plot and border plantings include *Canna*, *Watsonia*, *Geranium*, *Salvia*, *Phormium* and a collection of the more woody *Cistus* varieties.

Popular favourites, *Gladiolus*, *Watsonia*, the monotypic *Amaryllis belladonna*, *Nerine* and Dutch and bearded *Iris* can be viewed in this area and also the less common bird of paradise plants, *Strelitzia regina* and giant *Strelitzia nicolai*, and the spectacular golden flowered bloodroot, *Wachendorfia thyrsiflora*.

At the children's playground end visitors can currently see a collection of the world's most popular flower - the rose - although this may be discontinued when the New Zealand Garden Walk is implemented through this area. A range of hybrid tea roses display a variety of colours, shapes and fragrances.

Amongst a collection of *Washingtonia*, *Butia* and other palms at the north-western end of the River Edge Garden, a collection of endangered 'living fossil' cycads, *Lepidozamia peroffskyana*, represent this group of ancient cone-bearing plants that existed even during the time of the dinosaurs 140-200 million years ago. Although they are generally found in tropical and sub tropical forests, these plants represent a commitment to conservation characteristic of a modern botanical garden. Nearby, a specimen of Canary Islands dragon tree, *Dracaena draco*, continues this theme.

### **3.7 Tree Collection**

Trees have been planted from 1874 onwards on the Gisborne Botanical Gardens site and an eclectic range can now be seen here. Mature exotic and NZ native trees, large and small, evergreen and deciduous, grow in close proximity and provide pleasure to locals and visitors alike. From delicate Japanese maples and flowering cherries to the robust tulip and London plane trees, the fascinating self-grafted *Parrotia persica* to the bottle shaped *Brachychiton rupestris*, there is plenty to interest dendrology enthusiasts.



Good specimens of the 'living fossil' trees, *Ginkgo biloba* and *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, are present and also a fine example of the bald cypress, *Taxodium distichum*, with its curious 'knees'.

In the past there has been no real emphasis on themes in the Gardens, with interesting species now found throughout the park.

The advent of the Sister City gardens has created a need to group trees from specific geographical zones within these gardens in

order to provide a measure of integrity in their plantings. However, there is no need to restrict the choice of trees for other areas within the Gardens. Species for new plantings will be chosen for a number of reasons, including shade, beauty, rarity, particular qualities and geographic representation. It is expected that some trees will be planted for special occasions, but this will be carried out with discretion and be mainly restricted to the Sister City Gardens. It is Council policy to not erect memorial plaques in reserves, so only trees of exceptional significance will be marked in this way.

While donations of trees will be accepted from time to time, these trees will remain unmarked by plaques, although a record of their planting – occasion, date, planter, donor, etc – will be maintained in the Botanical Gardens records.

The labeling of trees in the Gardens has been attempted several times in the past and it is planned to carry out another programme of labeling in the near future if a suitable method is found. The main problem in retaining labels has been vandalism - a world-wide problem in public parks and gardens - so a vandal resistant means of clearly providing basic botanical information about the trees is being sought. In the recent past, several vandalism attacks have been made on trees in the Gardens, with multiple felling involved in one recent incident.

Vehicles have also been regularly driven illegally into the Gardens and over root systems. It is hoped that the perimeter fence proposed within this management plan will lead to a reduction in damage to trees. Graffiti on tree trunks will continue to be dealt with through the use of camouflage paints rather than abrasive techniques which may permanently damage the bark.

Some of the trees nearer the river are showing evidence of root girdling that could lead to shortened lives or stress problems, possibly from a winter high water table or poor planting techniques. Other trees are now quite mature and a number of the older trees are already moving into a state of decline. A planting plan will be developed to provide for succession in the tree inventory. Regular arboricultural inspections are scheduled and any necessary maintenance carried out, for public safety, tree health and amenity reasons. Only qualified arborists with amenity tree experience will be permitted to work on this tree collection. At times, particular trees may be removed to eliminate competition with or reduce the risk of damage to neighbouring trees, or to enhance the view of nearby specimens.