



President's Report to the Annual General Meeting Sunday 29 September 2024

I am pleased to provide a report on activities of the Friends of the Dunedin Botanic Garden for the year ended 30 June 2024.

This year has been a productive and stable year for the Friends' committee. As reported last year, we still await details of the Dunedin Botanic Garden Plan. However, progress has been made on this; the committee was invited to give feedback on a consultation document in October 2023 as a stakeholder, and this was presented to DCC councillors at a workshop in August. While we don't quite know the next steps of this, the committee is committed to continuing to advocate for the inclusion of the long-discussed Demonstration Garden and education opportunities in Garden. As soon as we have more details about the plan, we will share this with you.

Plant Sales

The October 2023 Rhododendron Day was a successful event. It was again held in the Upper Garden carpark, and was well attended by both plant sellers and plant lovers. The coffee cart was again very popular. However, unlike the previous couple of years, the weather did not hold up and the sale was closed 30 minutes early. Despite this, sales were still respectable and the tour of the Rhododendron Dell was well supported as in previous years. I thank the continued support of stallholders old and new for helping to make this an excellent event year on year.

The annual May Plant Sale was held in the Propagation Facility and was also very well attended – crowds were eagerly waiting the opening of the gates at 9.00 am. Sales were slightly down on the previous year, however this may be because of technical difficulties of the Eftpos machine (causing a long queue for the first 90 minutes) and the decision to keep plants as cheap as possible. All different plant varieties were popular, although we were left with a lot of succulents that were subsequently sold at the Information Centre in the following weeks. The committee has decided that to look into hiring a second Eftpos machine for the 2025 sale.

We are very grateful for the assistance for both of our plant sales from the Botanic Garden management and staff – we could not do this without their enthusiastic and practical support, all the preparation that goes in before the event and being there on the day. The work of a group of volunteers who assist in the propagation unit on the Friends' behalf is also acknowledged and we thank those of them who helped with the sale on the day.

Grants

The major financial decision that the Friends' made this year was to give \$100,000 towards the Childrens' Playground redevelopment. This decision was unanimously supported by the committee and we were consulted on parts of the design. Our contribution is going directly to a bespoke climbing frame for older children that otherwise would not have been included in the playground. I'm sure I speak on behalf of all of the committee when I say how proud we are to be contributing to this amazing community asset. This is the first significant financial contribution that the Friends have made since the installation of the pier at the duck pond in 2017. I look forward to seeing this open and enjoyed by families of all ages. In last year's report I also mentioned installing a picnic table in the Garden. I'm pleased to report that this is being included in the playground plan and also financed by the Friends (separate to the \$100,000 contribution).

The Friends also gave out three grants associated with the David Tannock Scholarships over the last year. This funding is available to staff from the Garden to assist with personal development expenses that may not be otherwise covered. This includes support to attend national and international events such as conferences or award ceremonies. We supported Kyla Matthewson and Zane Gray to attend the Young Horticulturalist of the Year Award ceremony in Christchurch in June. Given that Kyla won the

Young Amenity sector award and Zane was a runner up, it was great that we could support them to attend. We also supported Dylan Norfield to attend the 8th Global Botanic Garden Congress in Singapore held from 5-9 August 2024.

Activities in the Garden

We started the financial year by celebrating the 160th anniversary of the Botanic Garden. This was an excellent event and surprisingly well attended. The event started with a speech from Mayor Jules Radich who unveiled a plaque that acknowledges the support of all the volunteers since the Botanic Garden was opened. A specially made cake was also cut by patron Margaret Barker to mark the event. CREST and the Victorian ladies costume group called Images of the Past also attended to help bring colour to the occasion. I believe that events such as this are important to help foster interest in the Garden and bring people into the Information Centre for reasons other than feeding the ducks!

The Information Centre itself continues to be a major activity of the Friends, especially during the Summer cruise ship season. I am grateful to all the dedicated volunteers who staff the centre, the Rangers, and to Sue, who continues to spend a significant amount of a time and energy keeping the centre up and running. I also thank Georgia Middlemiss, who has taken on the Shop Co-Ordinator position and has done a great job of tasks such as the ordering of stock and stock management. The committee would like to expand the paid roles in the Information Centre, and are actively investigating the viability of creating a Shop Manager role which would remove some of the load that the Volunteer Co-Ordinator and the Treasurer currently bear.

Constitution and Membership

The Friends are currently in the process of rewriting our Constitution, which is a requirement of the new Charities Commission law. Most significant though is the repercussions for our membership, as under the new law, membership categories are fairly rigid. More investigation will need to take place to ensure that we get this right. This is still a work in progress and we will communicate any changes to our members (as this will be need to be ratified at either an AGM or a SGM).

We would like to increase our membership and hope to encourage people to join as a result of the increased publicity around the playground. Membership of the Friends remains fairly static despite the low annual fee of \$15.00 for individual membership. A significant amount of work has also taken place to clean up our membership database. We circulate quarterly newsletters to members and our Facebook presence has increased to ensure that we are keeping both our members and the public up to date with what we are doing. With the regular increases in postage we prefer to send the newsletter by email – most of our members do have access to this medium but there are a number for whom we still only have a postal address.

The committee has done a considerable amount of work around strengthening and tidying up our back end processes in the last 12 months. Of note is the MOU which was signed between the Friends and the Botanic Garden (on behalf of the DCC) to formalise the activities that take place in the Information Centre. Other developments have included tightening up our volunteer engagement processes, computer security, and written information available to the volunteers. While relatively unseen, this is important to get right. I imagine that more improvements will be identified as we go along.

Special thanks to the Botanic Garden staff for their willingness to assist the committee with a wide range of things and particularly to Alan Matchett and the Information Centre Rangers Aileen Ramsay and Eric Odell for their support of the volunteers. Eric resigned from this role and left in ?? The DCC intend advertising this position but at the time of writing Aileen is the sole Ranger for the Garden.

Committee

I must give thanks to the Friends committee this past year. Liz has decided to step down from the role of Treasurer, and the committee and I thank her for her diligent and methodical approach to the Treasurer role. I also thank Sue for continuing to wear multiple hats for the Friends, including as Acting President

while I am overseas (*I wrote most of this report sitting in cafes around Budapest and Prague*). The majority of the tidy up of the back end processes mentioned above has been led by Sue and Liz and I am very appreciative.

While this is my second year as President, I still feel at times as if I am finding my feet, so I appreciate all the support of the committee and our members. We are a small committee with a lot of moving parts to keep up in the air under our direction, and I am thankful for all the work that everyone has done this year. Being a small committee does have its challenges: we are currently without a Vice-President for the second consecutive year and as I need to step down next AGM we will be looking at how we can build our committee.

Lastly, thank you to you, our members, for your continued support this year. The committee appreciate everyone who attended any of our events (particularly the AGM) and I encourage you to spread the word to family and friends.

Sam Moncur
President, Friends of the Dunedin Botanic Garden

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We continue to be grateful for the loyal group of dedicated, experienced people volunteering in the Information Centre. This year we had many applications from first year Pharmacy students from the University. As part of their course curriculum they are required to complete 20 hours of voluntary work in the community and we were pleased to be able to accommodate most of those that applied to us for this work. It was a pleasure to have these students working with and for us but sadly they are not available once their semester ends and that is our busiest time with cruise ship visits and independent travellers.

Aileen Ramsay, DCC Ranger, continues to have oversight of the Information Centre volunteers and roster and we are indebted to her for ensuring the roster is fully staffed. We have been able to remain open throughout the year, with no disruptions due to lack of volunteers or weather events. Considering the Centre is open 363 days of the year and continues to be staffed by volunteers it is a credit to our team.

Sue Lambie continues to be the committee member responsible for the volunteers and works well with Aileen in achieving full roster coverage.

Our thanks go to the Botanic Garden staff for their assistance in and around the Information Centre, particularly the Rangers. Eric Odell left the DCC employment part way through the year and at the time of this report Aileen is the sole Ranger until a replacement is found for Eric. Having a Ranger on site certainly contributes to stability, continuity and a sense of security that their presence provides.

Sue Lambie

Volunteer Co-ordinator