

Welcome to Summer!

After languishing somewhat during Covid there is now much happening at the Bason Botanic Gardens.

New Sculpture

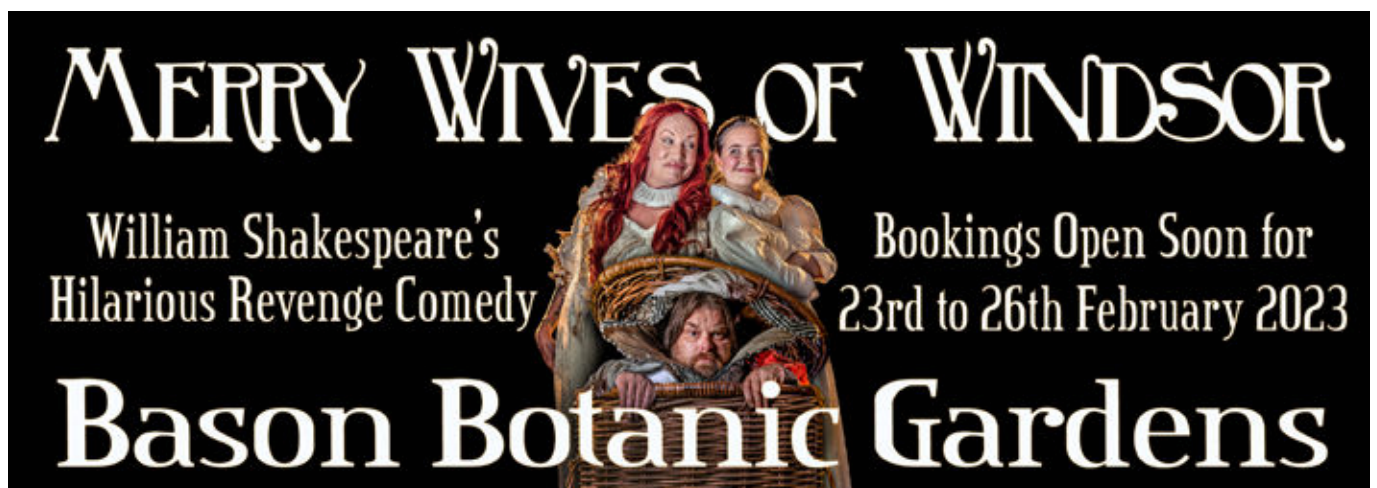
Ivan Vostinar has begun work to construct a sculpture, on site, adjacent to the new walkway to the north of the lake. This work, which is now receiving several layers of concrete plastered over the framework, should be virtually complete by the time you receive this newsletter. Here's an image of the framework to give you an idea of size and form.



More Seating

Close to the sculpture, Ivan has already constructed a seat in sympathetic style, overlooking the lake, courtesy of the family of Kathleen Goldstone. These constructions, along with the walkway around the lake and other seat installations mentioned separately in this newsletter, are the latest examples of the generosity of the people of Whanganui who have contributed so much to this beautiful, and tranquil, botanic garden. We thank you all sincerely.

Shakespeare in the Park



Karen Craig is directing her fourth Shakespeare play in the Bason Amphitheatre late February 2023. Come early for dinner (hampers availability to pre-order) or just for the evening. Tickets will be available from the Royal Whanganui Opera House or through their online booking system <https://rwoh.sales.ticketsearch.com/sales/>

Merry Wives of Windsor Summary

Falstaff decides to fix his financial woe by seducing the wives of two wealthy merchants. The wives find he sent them identical letters and take revenge by playing tricks on Falstaff when he comes calling. With the help of their husbands and friends, the wives play one last trick in the woods to put Falstaff's mischief to an end.

Kaka at Bason Gardens!

Jim Norris

If you want to cause excitement in a bunch of birders, a very good start would be to spread the story of a New Zealand Kaka having been sighted at Bason Botanic Gardens. One of the members of the local Camera Club happened upon and photographed, a Kaka feeding on the buds in a deciduous tree at the Gardens on 16 June 2022. News rapidly spread among those of us who like to study and photograph the local birdlife.



Bason Gardens is a stunning local botanical garden that was opened in 1982. It was not at the outset, much more than pasture that had been running deer. The Council and a group of keen horticulturalists were determined to develop it into a public botanical reserve. When I first visited in 1983, my immediate reaction was 'What a bunch of dreamers!' Now I regularly, and silently, eat humble pie as I see the wonderful result of both their dedication



and the huge amount of effort that has resulted in a Botanic Garden where the public can visit, barbecue, picnic, play informal sports and watch the wide variety of plant and birdlife that have now established in the woodlands and the wetlands.

So back to the kaka: Being very keen to get myself a photo of a local Kaka, by 4 July I had been out to Bason Gardens searching for six days in a row. At least four other Whanganui bird photographers had also been doggedly searching the areas of known sightings and any likely trees without any satisfaction. Bird photography can be frustrating, but at least these speculative trips are close to home and we can easily try, and try again.

The Kaka does seem to enjoy the gardens and had been seen by the staff several times. Annoyingly, once was at 10.30am not long before I arrived that same afternoon. On 29 June I heard a Kaka behind the Banksia trees, where the road dips down to the Boothby Fern House. I couldn't get a visual on the bird and it may have been

Become a Friend of the Bason

To Receive:

Periodic newsletters highlighting plants and upcoming events
Special offers on plants and/or seeds of special Bason plants.

Register here:

<https://basonbotanicgardens.com/about-us/friends-of-the-bason/>

To Volunteer

On the last Tuesday of each month our Bason volunteers meet in the vicinity of the Homestead Garden, where they may be involved in potting up, weeding and general maintenance.

Contact: Janice 06 3442495 or John 06 3456417

Sponsors and benefactors

These wonderful people enable dreams to become realities. If you would like to make a project donation, an endowment or gift of a memorial feature please contact the BBG Trust

Email here: basonbotanicgardens@gmail.com

BOOKINGS: Direct all Botanic Gardens venue/BBQ bookings to the Customer Service Desk

Whanganui District Council, phone 349 0001.

CONTACTS:

Chairman

Terry Dowdeswell, c/- PO Box 778, Wanganui
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in many areas and Denis Glover's 'Quardle Oodle Ardling' can be heard throughout the Gardens. Below the Millennium Hill, I was trying unsuccessfully, to get the portrait of an eastern rosella as it sat and watched me, laughing from his dark tree that he immediately left, having decided I had come close enough.

Beside a couple of the barbecue installations there are lots of planked seating where one can watch the mallard ducks, paradise shelducks, grey teal, and Australian coots that abound in the Lake. One of two black swans was gathering nesting material just in front of the Tea House, so cygnets would be a sight soon enough. I have seen pied shags fishing, and black shags with a little black shag roosting in the poplars above this peaceful picnic spot.

over the ridge where the Native Plants track winds down to a wetland.

Later, on 5 July, one of the workers recorded a video of a Kaka in the Banksias at the northern end of the reserve, and on 10 July, Phil Thomsen saw one fly into a tree behind the homestead. There was then, at least one bird continuing to frequent the gardens and there were two birds sighted in several of the early sightings. There was no doubt that we would keep trying for a photo of these elusive and intriguing native parrots.



It's not all bad news. In this now well developed Botanic Garden, there are many bird species that can be enjoyed. While I have been looking for Kaka, I have seen many tiny grey warblers feeding in the Banksia integrifolia above the Kowhai Bank. They are a difficult bird to photograph, as they constantly dart about gathering insects and nectar. That's when the bully boy Tui arrive. They come from everywhere, determined to protect their perceived right to the sweet nectar in the new flowers. The grey warblers are quickly harassed out of the trees, as are the many silvereys who also like their chances with a ready supply of nectar.

The plantings make this a delightful garden where the range of planted areas mean that most people will be able to find a place that is a pleasure to relax in and a joy to just sit and gaze. Just feel free to let me know if you sight that very annoying and equally elusive kaka!

Across the roadway, a hungry kereru was lurching on his fresh green salad, by systematically stripping the new leaves from young kowhai. I feared that the young trees were rapidly losing their life-giving foliage but I guess nature is in control of the subtle balance of our native birds and trees.



During my excursions, I encountered a charm of 35 goldfinches in the Arboretum and as is often the case, a harrier hawk was circling above, much to the consternation and panic of the rock pigeons that are everywhere. Magpies also, are common

More than a garden

Hel Loader

With summer stretching out before us, once again the Bason will be a popular spot for picnics, family gatherings, or just a stroll to admire the flowers. But the Bason is more than just a pretty setting, the clue is in the name - Bason Botanic Gardens. As a botanical garden we are dedicated to the collection, cultivation, preservation and display of a wide range of plants. Horticultural education plays as much of role as the beauty of our displays, and we are always on the lookout for ways to provide useful information. Key to this is the range of collections at the gardens. These are either in the form of species specific planting, or more thematic plantings. Collections form a useful resource to illustrate the growing needs of specific plants and inspiration for what you can plant in your own garden.

Examples of our species collections include:

- Arboretum, to the right as you enter the gardens is a loop road that takes you through a collection of conifers and native trees which have been left in their natural shapes rather than limbed up so you can see how they grow (and how big they get). This collection extends down the hill with a selection of eucalyptus trees.
- Iris bed, close to the pergola that leads to the conservatories is a circular brick bed that displays these rainbow-coloured flowers. Like many of our plant collections the initial source of these plants was from keen growers.
- Succulent display, down the bank of the Homestead Garden, is a testament to the horticultural skills of our late patron Vonnice Cave and solved the problem of what to grow



The succulent garden displaying plants suitable for full sun and poor soils.

in full sun and shallow soils, without blocking the view across the gardens.

- The Conservatories and Fernery are examples of purpose built structures to grow plants with more demanding needs, orchids in the heated Larson House and native ferns, which require cool shady conditions as provided in the Boothby Fern House.
- The Kōwhai collection, planted on the banks above the fern house extends the native plantings in this area to display a range of kowhai. Some garden visitors are surprised that there is more than one form of this flowering native.
- The Camellia grove, planted in a collection of species beds, displays a different types of camellias along with popular hybrid forms. This is just one of the collections in the Spring Gardens which also includes displays daffodil, magnolia, rhododendron and azalea.

Examples of thematic gardens include:

- The English garden around the old Bason Homestead, while larger than many home gardens, is a collection of beds which are popular with visitors seeking examples of how to tackle difficult areas in their own gardens. At the back of the house is an area of dry shade which provides inspiration, both in the way the beds have been designed, and the selection of plants that can grow successfully in these conditions. The yellow and blue beds by the wisteria walk provide an example of popular colour combinations, while the hot border is a sizzling display of what can be achieved in full sun.



Well mulched bed illustrating plants that can cope with dry shade in the rear of the Homestead Garden.



One of the changing displays of tender plants grown in the Conservatories.



Phyllostachys aureosulcata 'Yellow Groove' in the Japanese Tea House Garden.

- The Japanese garden with tea house is an interpretation of a tea garden designed to make the most of its lakeside setting and display of Asiatic plants including bamboo and acer. Not everyone wants to grow giant bamboo in their garden. It is, however, a wonderful experience to walk through the golden canes, and you can always consider growing one of the smaller ground cover forms.
- Native collections - Across from the Japanese garden are the wetlands, which look like they have always been there but actually have been carefully planted in a naturalistic style. This area includes a flax collection and leads to a track through native bush where you have the choice of hiking on to the fern house and native beds, or around to the nikau collection and back to the Homestead Garden.
- The Friendship garden features scented plants along a walkway and is particularly useful place to visit in winter to learn how to extend interest throughout the year. It is just one of the plant collections on the Millennium Hill which also includes more Mediterranean



A lesson in complementary colour scheme in the Homestead Garden.

plannings around the steps, and an impressive collection of aloes and agaves on its zig zag lawn paths.

What plant is that?

Hel Loader

One of the questions we are frequently asked is why we don't have more plant labels. While there have been a number of concerted efforts over the years to label key plants in our collections, all too frequently these have been tampered with or removed (sadly sometimes along with the plant they identified). As a result, we are focusing more on providing online forms of plant id through our web site and Facebook page.

We are in the process of expanding our website to include a more interactive database of photos and plant identification, but in the meantime, we regularly feature plants of seasonal interest in our newsletter and on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/basonbotanicgardens>

We are more than happy to identify plants featured on the latter if you post a question / photo on that forum.



Ivan Vostinar stands beside his new sculpture.



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