

Friends of Eastwoodhill newsletter

Going for gold!

A vision inspired by giant acorns and a beautiful National Arboretum led to the creation of a gold award winning display for Eastwoodhill at the prestigious Ellerslie International Flower Show.

The Eastwoodhill display was one of four to reach gold standard in the keenly-contested Hort Galore division competing against organisations like Lincoln University and the Christchurch Botanical Gardens. This great glory has only ever been achieved by Eastwoodhill once before, years ago when it teamed up with Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust from New Plymouth.

Eastwoodhill is delighted by the award especially as the event was largely based on pending celebrations for its centennial next year. "The Acorn to Oak theme showed off 100 years of growth and accomplishment at the arboretum and winning a gold award highlighted the great display and all that Eastwoodhill has to offer" said Eastwoodhill Friends Committee chair Pru Roberts.



Main image: People of all ages, from all corners of the globe came to admire the magnificent acorns nestled in the miniature arboretum that won a gold award at the Ellerslie International Flower Show.

Pru Roberts, chairwoman of the Eastwoodhill Friends Committee, delighted with the result.



Curator's report

Rain on the last day of February brought relief to the arboretum. After months of watering the trees and garden every week, it is great to have a break! Many of the young and not so young trees were showing advanced signs of stress and some will die despite our best efforts. When the temperature gets above 35° for extended periods there is little anyone can do.

Noisy pests

Another by-product of the hot weather was record numbers of cicada hatching. Some evenings thousands of them would burrow out of the ground and climb up the trees, shedding their skins and waiting for the warmth of the morning sun to harden their wings before they flew off. We have about 42 species and subspecies of cicada in New Zealand. The most common at Eastwoodhill is the chorus cicada (*Amphipsalta zelandica*).

Only the male cicada sing (if you could call it that) which lures the female. The male cicada makes the loudest sound in the insect world – duly noted at Eastwoodhill as at times it made sleeping difficult. After mating the male dies and the females lay between 400 and 600 eggs at various sites before dying. Cicadas are one of our most serious pests in the arboretum. They damage trees in several ways. At the larval stage they eat young tender roots and as adults they suck sap and lay their eggs in the young tender branches of small trees.

They are reputed to be good eating, tasting like asparagus or clam flavoured potatoes. Best to get them as they come out of the ground before their skin hardens. Maybe something for the next Fear Factor episode!



Fitting memorial

The construction of the HB Williams memorial is underway and the main construction should be finished by early June. It stands where the Petanque Court used to be - to the left of the Black Gates as you leave the Homestead Garden.

The memorial combines two design concepts: a large granite ball suspended on a film of water so the ball can be moved with little pressure and the ball set in a spiral design, often found in nature, called the Fibonacci spiral.

Towards the Centennial

The Wee Flat area is having a makeover. As this is one of the few flat clear areas we have in the arboretum, it is the site we will use for many of the Centennial activities next year including the speakers series and dinner. However, it needed to be drained and levelled properly to make it suitable. **Many thanks to Murray McPhail from Leaderbrand who kindly donated an amazing levelling machine and operator to do this work for us.**

Improvements at the centre

Thanks to the generosity of the J & T Hickey Trust we have three giant sun umbrellas for the Douglas Cook Centre courtyard. These umbrellas cover those tables which aren't already shaded by the trees and improve the ambience of the whole area.

Meanwhile, the kitchen is being redesigned to make it compliant with commercial standards.

New directions!

We are redesigning our visitor map. This gives us the opportunity to change some directions of the coloured walks to allow people to see different parts of the arboretum. So don't be surprised if next time you go for a walk you start heading off in a new direction!

Action packed autumn

We are all looking forward to a great autumn at Eastwoodhill this year – the influx of people who come to see the park in all its glorious colours makes it an exciting and very busy time. The sell out Soeur Design fashion show is to be held at Eastwoodhill in early April; the chariot will be running Easter weekend and for the duration of the school holidays and we are hosting the NZ Farm Forestry conference. Hopefully the recent rain will prolong the season and autumn will be as good as ever, although I see some trees are already getting their autumn colours.

Paul Wynen
CURATOR

Operation Ellerslie

Three days before the show was open to the public, everything was ready. The giant polystyrene acorns, fadges of leaves, crocuses, a garden gate and a huge backdrop photo had made the long journey from Eastwoodhill. Large, medium and small oak trees and a huge trailer load of bark had been carted to Hagley Park. Excitedly looking at their blank 6m x 3m space in the marquee a dedicated group of Eastwoodhill staff, volunteers and passionate landscape designer, Debra Stewart began their task – to create a miniature arboreal oasis.

They stepped back – mission complete! You could have been mistaken for thinking you were looking into the arboretum itself, invaded by a fall of giant acorns.

Nervously awaiting the results the creative team handed the reins to the next lot of volunteers who would showcase the stall to 50,000 ticket holders.

Excited spectators from all over New Zealand and the world filled the tent. Almost everyone commented on Eastwoodhill's wonderful display, and in particular the giant acorns. Children lined up to have their photo taken and admire the tiny slice of Eastwoodhill in Christchurch.

A big thank you to the Eastland Community Trust who donated \$5000 to the project and Tourism Eastland for their contribution. Thank you also to Allenton Nursery and the Little Big Tree Company for the use of their wonderful oak trees. Without the support of these organisations and all the 'Friends' who provided time and money to the project, Eastwoodhill would not have had a presence let alone a gold award.

Photo Credits

Front page: Main Image – Dick Boss
Pru – Photo South

Page two: Autumn leaves – Jo Von Pein
Cicada skins – Paul Wynen

Page three: Gray Clapman

Back page: Paul Wynen
Teddy Bears Picnic - The Gisborne Herald

Looking back

Mapping trees at Eastwoodhill

Eastwoodhill is home to one of the most comprehensive collections of exotic woody plant material in New Zealand. With about 3,500 different types of trees, shrubs and climbers and 15,000 trees on the hilly 135ha property the recording and mapping of the collection has never been an easy task.

In the early 1970s, Bob Berry, a Tiniroto farmer and noted plants man, created a remarkable document. His sheer love of plants and concern for Eastwoodhill led him to the conclusion that the specimens growing in the arboretum, many of them rare, must be listed. Within his catalogue Bob Berry detailed information on almost 3000 different species and sub-species of trees and other plants with the help of Douglas Cook's notes and planting lists.

A mapping project in the late 1980s by Marion McKay, a lecturer at Massey University, placed trees on hand drawn maps within a 100m square grid. Although still used occasionally, these were never updated and many trees have died and new trees have been planted since then. Using a grid to locate trees is a common method but has limitations when confronted with steep terrain such as at Eastwoodhill.

Into the future

In early 2004, Eastwoodhill curator Paul Wynen and his team initiated the first comprehensive review of the plant collection since the early 1970s - the development of a computerised mapping programme.

With the help of an understanding GIS consultant, Simon Garton, this software has expanded into a very powerful and useful management tool. The actual data capture took three and a half years but has enabled the arboretum to cost effectively locate and record the entire plant inventory.

With such a valuable resource on hand this programme not only means that the staff can monitor and track trees and their progress but it also means that all the information can be accessed by visitors on the new HP touch screen computer now up and running in the Visitor Centre.

The trail version of the programme is proving very popular with visitors, staff and volunteers; it enables anyone to locate not only any tree in the arboretum, but also other features like dedicated seats and trees, tracks and ponds etc. Simon and Paul are looking for ways to improve the trial version, so if anyone has any suggestions please let them know.

This type of information is crucial so we can plan how our collection should grow and develop over the next 100 years to keep Eastwoodhill as the foremost collection of woody plant material in New Zealand.



Aerial photo of Eastwoodhill Arboretum



CELEBRATING
100
YEARS
1910 - 2010

Centennial celebrations

Plans are well underway for the 2010 Eastwoodhill Centennial which is to be staged in the park at Easter next year.

At this stage the centennial events are still being finalised but the intention is to create a number of events throughout the year - all tied to the celebration of 100 years at Eastwoodhill.

These include speakers in the park, a centennial dinner, a sculpture series and much more.

The centennial committee is currently searching for sponsors for centennial events and there are a number of sponsorship options available so get in touch if you know someone who might be

interested in being a part of the celebrations.

To register your initial interest in attending please let us know so we can send you a registration form when the details are confirmed. The celebration promises to be an extravaganza of activities and events - something for everyone.

Whilst at Ellerslie the Friends of Eastwoodhill volunteers met a lot of people who were interested in coming to Eastwoodhill and the centennial - so be in quick.

Tickets will be limited for some events. You can either email dana@expresspr.co.nz or publicrelations@eastwoodhill.org.nz



Franklinia alata

Plant of the month

The Franklin tree

Late summer can be a lean time for colour in the arboretum but a few gems shine. As many of you know, I'm not the biggest fan of Camellia, however some of the other members of the Theaceae family are another story! One of those that flowers in late summer and has a very interesting background is *Franklinia alata*. We are fortunate to have a young specimen growing just below the old fountain in Douglas Park and it is flowering as I write.

Franklinia has only one species in the genus (meaning it's monotypic) and is commonly called the Franklin tree or Ben Franklin tree in honour of Benjamin Franklin. It is native to Georgia, USA.

Franklinia has been extinct for just over 200 years. It is thought to be closely related to the Asian genera *Schima* and crosses have occurred between *Schima* and *Franklinia* as well as *Gordonia* and *Franklinia*.

All known living specimens originated from a few trees grown by eighteenth-century botanists John and William Bartram who found the tree growing along the Altamaha River near Fort Barrington in October 1765.

He was the first to report the extremely limited distribution of *Franklinia*. "*We never saw it grow in any other place, nor have I ever since seen it growing wild, in all my travels, from Pennsylvania to Point Coupe, on the banks of the Mississippi, which must be allowed a very singular and unaccountable circumstance; at this place there are two or three acres of ground where it grows plentifully.*" (W. Bartram 1791: 468).

The tree disappeared within the next few decades, possibly destroyed by land clearing activities. In spite of numerous searches no other specimens were found. The tree was never seen in the wild after 1803 but, thanks to the Bartrams, *Franklinia* still exists.

School holiday fun

The school holidays are fast approaching and Eastwoodhill is the perfect place to blow off the classroom cobwebs. From Easter Shirley will be setting up some exciting trails full of fun activities for kids to follow and explore. There will also be a nature craft table set up so kids can get creative with all the things our environment provides. This year we are holding a collage competition for the best nature art produced at Eastwoodhill and Muirs Book Shop has kindly donated a book voucher for the winner!

Autumn in our National Arboretum sets the perfect playground for running, playing and learning in the wonders of

nature. What better time to take advantage of this wonderful resource we have. If you decide to explore Eastwoodhill on Easter Sunday there will be a special treat to be collected from the visitor center.

The Scarlet Oak Café at Eastwoodhill will be open the duration of the holidays for a well deserved treat. The Chariot which can take up to eight people on a guided tour of the Arboretum will also be operating everyday of the holidays. For more information give the friendly staff a call at the office, or make your way out to Eastwoodhill and they will set you in the right direction.

What a day

On Sunday January 17, we held our annual Teddy Bears Picnic. The arboretum came alive with the sounds of music as the Classic Hits Radio tunes created a wonderful ambience at Eastwoodhill, which was a buzz with over 120 children. Clutching their bears, kids enjoyed the fabulous bear hunt, pass the parcel, bear craft table, bouncy castle, face painting and stories read by Jan Shanhun of Poppies Bookshop.

We were fortunate with the weather as rain was predicted for mid-day but held off until the final activity concluded. Some very worn out but content children and bears headed home counting down until next year.

The Friends of Eastwoodhill are grateful to Shirley, Rose and George for the effort they put into organising activities, publicity and rewards.



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Visitor Centre:
 Open Daily 9.30 – 4.30pm. P: 06 8639003
 Staff are available during weekday office hours. Volunteers staff the visitor centre during weekends and public holidays. Guided chariot tours are running full time for the duration of the school holidays.