



Green Fingers

FROM the earliest days of human settlement the residents of this geographically remote country have been gardeners, initially out of necessity but since c1840 to satisfy a steadily changing combination of gardening for subsistence and pleasure.

WHEN first settled, New Zealand had few edible plants and many of them required careful processing before they could be eaten. Cooked in an earth oven, the below-ground parts of the cabbage tree were a source of fruit sugar while the tops contained an edible shoot; the ripe fruits of tutu yielded a refreshing juice; raupo pollen was used to make a damper; and the fernroot was an important starchy food.

To early colonial society the native forests and open tussock grasslands required massive transformation before their economic potential could be realised. Little wonder that from the earliest days of European settlement horticulturists and seed merchants set up shop to sell the vast quantities of imported seed, rooted cuttings and young plants required by town and country people: conifers and eucalypts for shelter and fuel, orchard trees and vegetables for the homestead garden, hedge plants to define fields and shelter stock from strong winds, and a diverse array of grasses, clovers, root crops and grains for farms and station. It did not take long, however, for people to discover that they had not set up home in a uniformly benign environment.

Strong winds, floods and unseasonal weather could seriously damage, even destroy, a carefully tended plantation or cottage garden in a few hours, but accumulated experience showed which plants did well in the new land and which required nurturing if they were to thrive. Some of that experience was passed by word of mouth between neighbours, and visitors to farm or cottage would often arrive with seeds or slips, leaving with a pot of jam or a basket of fruit and vegetables. From the earliest days of European settlement, newspapers, magazines and various colonist guides helped fill information gaps for colonial society.

For several generations of New Zealanders, the household garden was a place to grow potatoes, green vegetables, and fruits of many kinds for the family. Flowers were often grown in narrow strips alongside paths and at the front of the house. There may have been a lawn and a few decorative shrubs, but they were less important for the well-being of the family than the intensively cultivated vegetable garden and small fruit and orchard trees at the rear of the property. That situation was widespread in New Zealand until the 1970s when increasing prosperity, smaller families, and both parents in paid employment brought about a change. Why grow potatoes and lettuces when they can be bought cheaply all year round? Why tie yourself to the property by tending an herbaceous border when a judicious mix of organic mulch, ground cover and shrubby plants will keep the weeds at bay?

New Zealanders did not cease gardening 25 years ago.

Rather, they aspired to easy-care arrangements for their properties. Satisfaction of the family's needs for vegetables and fruit from the produce of a small garden was no longer a priority. Many New Zealand household gardeners began to specialise: alpine plants, azaleas, camellias, frost-tender plants for the glasshouse or growth indoors, fuchsias, native New Zealand species, orchids, rhododendrons... each chosen to reflect prevailing fashions and individual preferences. At the same time professional garden designers, previously the valued servants of rich private landholders and civic corporations, provided advice, plants and labour for a fee, and the traditionally gendered nature of gardening — with men tending lawns, vegetables and fruit trees and women caring for the flowers — was well on the way to disintegrating.

The Hocken Library collection of books on gardens and gardening in New Zealand (not all of which are noted here) fill out and exemplify the foregoing summary. The majority of its holdings were published after 1979 and most reflect the current passion for the garden as a public fashion statement about the owner. In the early days of colonial settlement many species of native fern, vine, shrub and tree were transplanted to cottage gardens from nearby stands of bush. That activity waned during the 20th century although the past decade or so has seen a resurgence of interest. After almost 150 years of setting their face against native plants, New Zealanders now see merit in nurturing functional combinations of native and exotic species that express their individuality and provide niches for native birds and insects.

Gardening Guides

Perhaps the earliest gardening guide is Chapman's *Handbook to the Farm and Garden* (Ak, 1862). Detailed information was later provided in W.Goldie's section on horticulture in *Brett's Colonists' Guide* (Ak, 1883). 'Aotea' (A.E. Lowe) wrote *The Sun Gardening Book* (Chch) in 1915.

The Matthews family have produced numerous gardening books over the last seven decades. During the Depression, J.W. Matthews' *The New Zealand Garden Guide: One Thousand Short Cuts and Practical Suggestions for NZ Gardeners* (Wgtn, 1934) was published, followed by such books as *The NZ Garden Dictionary* (Wgtn, 1945, 1949 & 1960), *Garden with Matthews: Highlights on the Art of Growing Fruit, Flowers and Vegetables* (Wgtn, 1949), and *Matthews on Gardening: A Practical Approach....* (Wgtn, 1960 & 1968). Books by other family members are noted elsewhere.

Among the prolific writers of gardening books during the final quarter of the 20th century is Eion Scarrow, and his widely-read books include *Eion Scarrow's Question & Answer*

Book on Gardening (Ak, 1977), *More Questions & Answers on Gardening* (Syd & Ak, 1981), *The Complete Eion Scarrow Gardening Guide* (Ak, 1983), and *Eion Scarrow's Guide to Gardening in NZ* (Ak, 1983). 'Jonathan Spade' (Noel Chappell) has written *Pleasure Among Plants: The Joy of Gardening* (Ak, 1986), *Making a Garden: What a NZ Gardener Needs to Know* (Ak, 1991), and others mentioned below. A third is Geoff Bryant, author of *The Ultimate NZ Gardening Book* (Ak, 1994) and others noted later. Other general books published in the same period include Joy Browne, *Good Gardening with the NZ Consumers Institute* (Ak, 1993); Olive Dunn, *Delights of Gardening in NZ* (Ak, 1994); G.Bryant & E.Scarrow, *Complete NZ Gardener: A Practical Guide* (Ak, 1995); W.G. Sheat, *Complete A-Z of Gardening in NZ* (Ak, 1985 & 1989); and Jacqueline Sparrow, *The Easy Gardener: Tough Reliable Plants, Tips for the Impatient Gardener...* (Ak, 1999).

Vegetable Growing

Vegetables grown for the family table were of considerable importance until the advent of frozen food and supermarkets: in many rural areas the vegetable garden and orchard provided the necessities of life. John Sinclair's *Vegetable Growing in NZ* (Ak, 1918 & 1920) is one of the earliest specialised manuals. Of significance were David Tannock, *Potato Growing in NZ* (Chch, 1922) and *Manual of Gardening in NZ* (Ak, 1916, 1921, and republished in 1934 as *Practical Gardening in NZ*). The drive for self-sufficiency in food was a patriotic imperative during World War 2, and J.A. McPherson & A.C. Pye, *Vegetable Growing in NZ* (Chch, c1943), and David Pritchard, *Vegetable Growing in the Home Garden* (Wgtn, 1944) were important guides. Postwar, A.C. Kennelly, *The Home Vegetable Garden* was published as NZ Dept Agric. Bulletin 324 (1952).

The closing two decades of the 20th century brought an array of increasingly specialist, beautifully illustrated practical guides to vegetable growing. The prevailing ethos was the garden as a demonstration of one's skills: subsistence barely counted. Amongst these guides are Eion Scarrow, *NZ Vegetable Gardening Guide* (Ak, 1976) and *Vegetable Gardening* (Ak, 1985); Bee Baldwin, *Home Vegetable Gardening* (Wgtn, 1984); Jonathan Spade, *NZ Kitchen Garden: Vegetable and Herbs for all Seasons* (Ak, 1993) and *NZ Vegetable Garden* (Ak, 1993); Katherine Smith, *Super Foods: How to Grow Them, Why You and Your Family Need Them Now* (Ak, c1993); and P.J. Rhodes, *NZ Vegetable Growing for Beginners* (Lincoln, 1993).

Flowers

Until recently, the flower garden lay close to the street frontage where it could be seen and admired. People bought wreaths of flowers for funerals, but outside the larger towns and cities it was unusual to see cut flowers for sale in shops. Flowers were grown at home and there were a few general guides, with some of them directed primarily at the commercial grower: James Young & D. Hay, *Flower Gardening in NZ* (Ak, 1919); J.P. Salinger, *Flower Gardening with the Journal of Agriculture* (Chch, 1962) and *Commercial Flower Gardening* (Wgtn, 1985); Bee Baldwin, *Growing Flowers in NZ for Pleasure and Profit* (Wgtn, c1988); and Geoff Bryant, *The Flower Grower's Handbook: Annuals and Perennials* (Ak, 1994). People interested in growing unusual plants could select from commercial and general catalogues, notably Phillip

Perennial Gardening in NZ (Wgtn, 1993); Geoff Bryant ed., *Botanica: The Illustrated A-Z of Over 10,000 Garden Plants for NZ Gardens and How to Cultivate Them* (Ak, 1997); and the anonymous *500 Popular Annuals and Perennials for NZ Gardeners* (Ak, c1998), all of which exemplify the recent shift towards gardening as a mix of pleasurable relaxation and expert activity.

Trees and Shrubs

Informative guides held by the Hocken Library include Allan Searle (adapted by William Secker) *500 Shrubs for NZ Gardens* (Ak, 1979); Marion B. MacKay, *Survey and Evaluation of the Distribution of Selected Exotic Tree Genera in Private Collections in NZ* (PNth, 1990); and Geoff Bryant (ed.) *The Ultimate Book of Trees & Shrubs for NZ* (Ak, 1996).

Gardening Calendars

From the earliest times of European settlement, newspapers and some magazines have contained guides as to what should be done in the garden in the coming week or so: when to prune rampant growth, sow particular seeds, topdress the lawn, etc. Their virtue has always been that they are responsive to the vagaries of the weather, whereas a printed yearly calendar is, perforce, a coarser guide. One of the first local guides to planting dates in colonial times is Swainson's 'Gardener's Calendar for New Zealand' which was included in the *Wellington Almanac* for 1851. Two decades later appeared Felix Wakefield's *Gardener's Chronicle for NZ* (Wgtn, 1870).

Michael Crooks, *NZ Gardening Calendar: A Month by Month Guide* (Wgtn, 1981 & Ak, 1998); Barbara Matthews, *A NZ Gardener's Notebook* (Ak, 1983); Jonathan Spade, *The Garden Year in NZ: A Monthly Guide to Making the Most of Your Home Garden* (Ak, 1988), *The NZ Organic Gardening Year: A Month by Month Guide for Vegetables and Flowers* (Ak, 1989) and *A Year in My Garden* (Ak, 1990); *The Star Garden Book, with a Week by Week Guide for Southern Gardeners* (16th ed., Dn, 1990); Kerry Carman, *Unfolding Seasons: Leaves from the Listener Garden Diary* (Ak, 1992); and Dennis Greville, *The NZ Gardener's Yearbook: A Month by Month Guide* (Ak, 1995) were all published in the final decades of the 20th century. It is interesting to speculate on possible reasons for the two clusters of publishing dates. Colonists had little local experience to guide them, so a published guide supported by regular newspaper columns was essential. For the next century, most people learned practical gardening at school and from their parents. In recent years the long line of oral tradition has faded and the new type of gardener has needed expert guidance.

Practical Gardening Guides

For several generations, first Brett's then the ubiquitous Yates' gardening guides were to the household garden what Edmond's cookbook was to the kitchen: straightforward, comprehensive, informative and geared to New Zealand conditions. Both were heirs to a tradition that has its origins in the early days of European settlement and were frequently recast for a changing, more sophisticated readership. The Hocken has several editions of Brett's guides from 1920 onwards, including *Brett's Gardening Guide* revised by T.W. McPherson and republished as *The Star Guide to NZ Gardening* (Ak, 1968), as well as an edition prepared by T.P. Troy (Ak, 1977). Don Bramley, *Yates Guide to Horticulture* (Wgtn, 1984); Gaye

from *Africa Violet to Zucchini* (Ak, 1990) and Allen Gilbert, *Yates Green Guide to Gardening: A No Fuss Guide to Organic Gardening* (Ak, 1992) are recent examples of books carrying the Yates' stamp.

More recently, Palmer's guides have taken pride of place: Sue Linn, *Palmer's Book of Terracotta Gardening* (Ak, 1994), *Palmer's Book of Spring Bulbs* (Ak, 1995), and *Palmer's Gardenworld Real Gardening, Real Easy* (Ak, 1996). Other guides, in order of publication date and showing a steady evolution from the general to the increasingly specialised, are: M. Murphy, *Handbook of NZ Gardening* (Chch, 1885) and the 3rd edition retitled *Handbook of Gardening for NZ* (c1895); J. Lockhart, *An Easy Guide to NZ Gardening* (Wanganui, c1900); David Tannock, *Manual of Gardening in NZ* (Ak, 1916; 2nd ed. 1921); 'Kowhai' (Myrtle E. Fisher), *My Winter Garden* (Wgtn, 1923); J.A. McPherson, *Whitcombe's Complete NZ Gardener* (Chch, 1943); Elsie Morton, *Gardening's Such Fun* (Ak, 1944); J.P. Salinger, *The New Zealander's Guide to Pebble Gardens* (Ak, 1971); Joan Money, *NZ Woman's Weekly Gardening Book* (Ak, 1984); Jean Lawrence, *Gardens Full of Wings: Notes of a Wilderness Gardener* (Wgtn, 1976) and *Gardening Tales* (Wgtn, 1981); Julian Matthews, *The NZ Garden Book* (Ak, 1986 & 1992); Glad McArthur, *Glad McArthur's Lifetime of Gardening* (Dn, 1992); and Karen H. Haynes (ed), *NZ Garden Adviser: Expert Advice for the NZ Home Garden* (Ak, 1993).

Small Gardens

With the demographic and economic changes of the past two decades has come an interest in catering for small gardens in the restricted spaces of inner-city properties. The 'quarter-acre paradise' that New Zealanders were reputed to aspire to is now too big, too expensive and too demanding of labour but, as many recent gardening books and articles in the popular press show, with careful selection of plants and intensive cultivation methods it is possible to grow a great deal in a restricted space. Books of interest include Susan Firth & Gill Hanly, *NZ City Gardens* (Whitianga, 1989); Kerry Carman, *Portrait of a Garden: Excerpts from a NZ Garden Diary* (Wgtn, 1983 & Ak, 1990); Christine Dann, *Cottage Gardening in NZ* (Wgtn, 1990); Olive Dunn, *Delights of Cottage Gardening in NZ* (Ak, 1991); and Jane Edmanson & Lorrie Lawrence, *The NZ Garden* (Ak, 1993).

Large Gardens

Even in early colonial times, large rural properties often had splendid gardens: initially the responsibility of the young wife, but soon maintained and extended by professional gardeners. Many of these gardens remain extant. Several beautifully illustrated regional surveys of large private gardens are held in the Library, including Barbara Matthews, *Gardens of NZ* (Ak, 1975 & 1983); Thelma Strongman, *The Gardens of Canterbury: A History* (Wgtn, 1984); Gil Hanly & Barbara Telford, *Private Gardens of NZ — Auckland* (Ak, 1992); Steve Parker & Michele Hider, *Private Gardens of NZ — Christchurch* (Ak, 1992); Yvonne Cave, *Private Gardens of NZ — Wanganui, Rangitikei, Manawatu* (Ak, 1993); Jacqueline Walker, *The Garden-Lover's Guide to NZ* (Ak, 1994); Denis & Jillian Friar, *Private Gardens of NZ — South Island* (Ak, 1995); and Susette Goldsmith, *The Gardenmakers of Taranaki* (N.Plym, 1997). They show why New Zealand has become a favoured destination for tourist groups interested in gardening: a place where large

ideal conditions.

Public Gardens & Green Cities

Although the Hocken holds relatively few books about the public gardens that grace our towns and cities, the following are notable: P. Tritenbach, *Botanic Gardens and Parks in NZ* (Ak, 1987); Winsome Shepherd & W. Cook, *The Botanic Garden, Wellington 1840–1987* (Wgtn, 1988); Thelma Strongman, *City Beautiful. The First 100 Years of the Christchurch Beautifying Association* (Chch, 1999); and Winsome Shepherd, *Wellington's Heritage. Plants, Gardens and Landscape* (Wgtn, 2000). Of Dunedin interest is G. Paterson's thesis 'History and Development of the Dunedin Botanic Garden, 1863–1970' (1972?).

Specialist Gardening

Of the hundreds of introduced plants that thrive in New Zealand conditions, camellias, rhododendrons including azaleas, and roses seem to have inspired the greatest affection in gardeners and a large number of books: Margaret Tapley, *Camellia Grower's Handbook* (Ak, 1994), and *Growing Camellias* (Ak, 1996), also *Rhododendrons in NZ* (Ak, 1989) and *The Rhododendron Grower's Handbook for New Zealanders* (Ak, 1991); Geoff Bryant, *The Azalea Grower's Handbook for New Zealanders* (Ak, 1991) and *Growing Rhododendrons and Azaleas* (Ak, 1995); John Kenyon & Jacqueline Walker, *Vireyas for NZ Gardens* (Ak, 1997); Pat Greenfield, *Pukeiti, NZ's Finest Rhododendron Garden* (Ak, 1997); and Murray Richards, *Rhododendrons and Azaleas for NZ Gardens* (Ak, 1998).

James Young, *Rose Gardening in NZ* (Ak, c1922) is the earliest book on rose gardening in the collection. Others are Nancy Steen, *The Charm of Old Roses* (Wgtn, 1966 & Ak, 1987); Florence Preston, *From Rocks to Roses* (Ingill, 1978); Keith Stewart, *Rose Antipodes: The History of Roses in NZ* (Ak, 1994); and Peter Beales et al. *Botanica Roses: The Encyclopedia of Roses for NZ Gardeners* (Nth Shore, 1998).

Other titles that point to the burgeoning interest in particular plants are: Glyn Church, *Hydrangeas* (Ak, 1999); Karen Glasgow, *Iris* (Ak, 1996); Geoff Bryant, *Rare and Unusual Plants for NZ Gardens* (Ak, 1996); and Yvonne Cave, *The Succulent Garden* (Ak, 1996). An early publication in this area is David Tannock's *Rock Gardening in NZ* (Ak, 1924).

Native Plants

Although colonial society knew about native plants, it took until late in the 20th century for New Zealanders to appreciate what was by then steadily slipping away. Two respected early botanists tried — unsuccessfully — to bring about a change in attitude towards native species: Henry H. Travers, *Cultivation of Native Plants* (Dn, 1911); and Leonard Cockayne, *The Cultivation of NZ Plants* (Ak, 1923).

As with many other aspects of gardening in this country, things began to change in the 1970s. Recent books are: Barbara Matthews, *Growing Native Plants* (Wgtn, 1979); Joe Cartman, *Growing NZ Alpine Plants* (Ak, 1985); Eion Scarrow, *NZ Native Trees and Shrubs* (Ak, 1986); Julian Matthews, *NZ Native Plants for Your Garden* (Ak, 1987) and *Favourite Native Plants for the NZ Home Garden* (Ak, 1993); Muriel Fisher, *Gardening with NZ Ferns* (Ak, 1984) and, with Margaret Forde, *Growing NZ Plants, Shrubs & Trees* (Ak, 1994); Andrew Crowe, *The Quick Find Guide to Growing Native Plants* (Ak, 1987); and Yvonne Cave, *The Gardeners' Encyclopedia of NZ*

Native Plants (Ak, 1999); and L.J. Metcalfe, *The Cultivation of NZ Trees and Shrubs* (Wgtn, 1972; Ak, 1987, 1991, 1993 & c1998), *The Cultivation of NZ Plants* (Ak, 1993), *The Propagation of NZ Native Plants* (Ak, 1995), *The Cultivation of NZ Native Grasses* (Ak, 1998) and *NZ Native Rock Garden & Alpine Plants* (Ak, 2000).

The Lighter Side

For many New Zealanders, gardening remains a serious activity, but Diana Anthony, *A Sense of Humus: a Bedside Book of Garden Humour* (Chch, 1997) and Stephanie Parkes, *The Renovated Transitional Bungalow Garden* (Chch, 1996) point to the lighter side.

Gardening Organisations

Small towns and large cities enjoy flower shows, and the competitive spirit of New Zealand gardeners is fostered by them. There are books to guide the exhibitor: Royal NZ Institute of Horticulture, *Official Judging Rules and Guide to Exhibitors* (Wgtn, 1950); and Harriet Allan, *Garden Show Guide to Gardening in NZ* (Ak, 1993). Louise Shaw looks back in *A History of the Dunedin Horticultural Society, 1851–2001* (Dn, 2000).

Trade Publications

Allen Hale's *Pioneer Nurserymen of NZ* (Wgtn, 1955) is a selective survey of plant sellers but is in need of revision. One of the earliest New Zealand garden companies was Millichamps in Ashburton, the centenary of which was marked by *Millichamps: 100 Years of Growing, 1886–1986* (Ashburton, 1986). Other useful references include S. Challenger, 'Early Nursery Catalogues — an Historical Resource' in *NZ Libraries* (vol.41(4), 1978, 107–8) and such trade catalogues as: *George Matthews Plant & Seed Catalogue* (Dn, c1890); Moncrieff & Stewart Ltd, *General Catalogue* (Dn, 188?); Matheson & Roberts, *Standard Seeds and Plants* (Dn, 1954); and John Bright's Nurseries, *The Garden Glorious* (P.Nth, c1961). H. Budden, *Bulbous Flowers* (Wgtn, 1979) is a reprint of an 1880s Nelson catalogue.

Gardening for Therapy

Bee Baldwin offers practical advice in *Carry on Gardening: a Handbook for Experienced Gardeners who Want to Carry on Gardening in Spite of Disablement or Increasing Age* (Wgtn, c1988).

Garden History

By far the most comprehensive overview is Helen Leach's *1000 Years of Gardening in NZ* (Wgtn, 1984), which begins with the subsistence gardening of the Maori and closes with the diverse activities of the present-day gardener. (Her *Cultivating Myths* (Ak, 2000), incidentally, discusses aspects

of British and European gardening).

Other interesting accounts of gardening since early colonial days are to be found in Matthew Bradbury ed. *A History of Gardening in NZ* (Ak, 1991); Mary Burnard, *Garden Heritage of NZ* (Wgtn, 1984); and 'A Suffolk Lady' (Emily White), *My NZ Garden* (Wanganui, 1902), later edited by Kerry Carman as *Emily's Garden: the Colonial NZ Garden of a Suffolk Lady* (Ak, 1990). The career of an eminent landscape gardener is told in Rupert Tipples, *Colonial Landscape Gardener: Alfred Buxton of Christchurch* (Lincoln, 1989).

New Gardens for New Times

Among the many books on garden design for New Zealand conditions, mostly published since 1970, are the anonymous *Garden Design in Australia & NZ* (Syd, 1971); Julian Matthews, *Creative Home Landscaping in NZ* (Ak, 1987); Bee Baldwin, *Gracious Gardens in Small Spaces* (Ak, 1992); Simon Swaffield et al, *Garden Design: A NZ Guide* (Chch, 1993); Gil Hanly, *Design Ideas for NZ City Gardens* (Chch, 1994) and *NZ Town & Country Gardens* (Ak, 1993); Diana Anthony, *A Book of Gardens: Creative Ideas for New Zealanders* (Nth Shore, 1995), *NZ Potager: the Ornamental Vegetable Garden* (Ak, 1997) and *Gardening for the 21st Century* (Ak, 2000); and Alan Seale, *New Life for Old Gardens*, adapted for NZ conditions by Julian Matthews (Ak, 1999).

The archetypal activity of the committed gardener, making compost, is the subject of Ann Reilly (adapted for NZ by John Patrick) in *Gardening Naturally: Getting the Most from Your Organic Garden* (Noble Park, Vic., 1998). Other books on simple technology and novel approaches are: E.O. Petersen, *The Garden Frame and Small Glasshouse* (Wgtn, 1946); Eion Scarrow, *NZ Gardening Under Glass* (Ak, 1976), *Greenhouse Gardening* (Ak, 1986), and *Guide to Indoor Plants* (Wgtn, 1987); Jill Sturgen, *Gardening With Containers* (Ak, 1993); Jacob de Ruiter, *Creating a Natural Garden: Beautiful Low-Maintenance Gardens in NZ* (Ak, 1994); Geoff Bryant, *Greenhouse Gardening* (Ak, 1995); Kevin Walsh & Geoff Bryant, *Water-Saving Gardening in NZ* (Ak, 1995); and Bill Ward, *Container Gardening for Summer and Autumn* (Dn, 1997), *Dirty Secrets* (Dn, 1999) and *Bill Ward's Edible Garden* (Dn, 2000).

Periodicals

The Hocken holds an almost complete run of the *NZ Gardener* (1944–), as well as *NZ Plants and Gardens* (1955–68).

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