

CUTTINGS

THIS WEEKEND

- Plants 4 U @ Rakaia returns this year from 9am to 1pm today with sales of all types of plants, including bulbs, at St Andrews Presbyterian Church Hall, Main Rd, Rakaia.
- Woodend Spring Flower Show, Woodend Community Centre, School Rd. 1pm-4pm today. Demonstrations at 1.30pm and 2.30pm. Entry \$2; children free.
- Daily guided walks in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens have begun for the new season. Meet at the main gates near the Canterbury Museum at 1.30pm, 90-minute walk. \$10. Group bookings, ph 384 3475.
- There may still be places in the Sevenoaks' introduction to permaculture course today from 9.30am - 4.30pm. \$40. Ph 981 7580.

■ Quarry planting day. Halswell Quarry's public planting today, 10am to noon, to plant 800 natives in a swale. Signposted from Kennedy's Bush Rd carpark.

■ St Peter's annual plant sale. Vegetables, fruit, flowers, shrubs, natives – all raised by parishioners – are on sale at the St Peter's annual plant sale next Saturday, October 12, from 9am to noon on the corner of Yaldhurst and Main South roads.

■ Lawn care. Alan Morgan, turf and lawn care expert is giving a demonstration on how to maintain good quality home lawns, covering seasonal lawncare, fertilisers and diseases next Saturday October 12 at 2pm at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Information Centre at 2pm. Gardens' Friends \$2; non-members \$5.

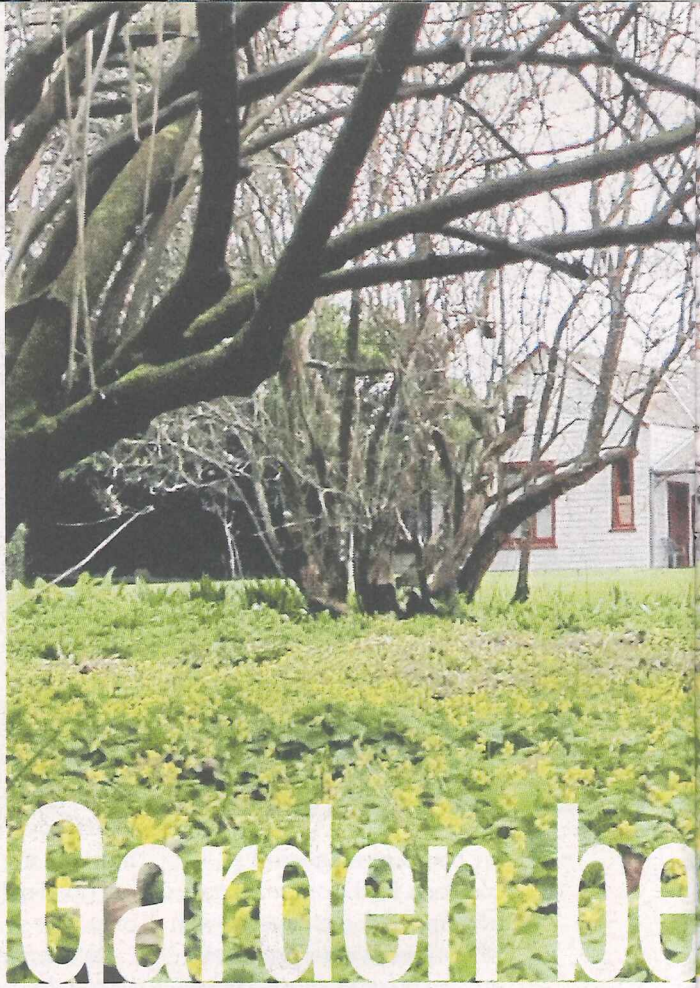
■ Ramblers meeting. The Canterbury Horticultural Society Ramblers are meeting at 9.30am on October 8, at the Hawford Rd entrance to Hansen Park. All welcome.

■ Playcentre garden fundraiser. Five families from the heart of Mid-Canterbury are opening their beautiful country gardens on October 12 to raise funds for the Mayfield Playcentre. Also running is a fete with stalls, including the playcentre's which is selling seedlings of mescaline, spinach, coloured carrots and giant pumpkins, Maori potatoes, alpine strawberries, herbs and Himalayan lillies (known locally as Mt Peel lillies). Tickets for the garden tour and fete are \$20 pre-sold, or \$25 on the day. Fete-only tickets are \$10. Tickets available from Lushingtons and Reflections in Ashburton, Terra Viva in Christchurch, the Kaiapoi Florist, or email thehomegrowinggardentour@gmail.com, or post cheques (payable to Mayfield Playcentre) to 362 Shepherds Bush Road, RD5, Ashburton, 7775.

MARK THIS DATE

- The annual Friends of the Botanic Gardens plant sale starts at 9.15am on October 19 outside the kiosk in the gardens.

To contact gardening editor Mary Lovell-Smith, phone 03 943-2555, email mary.lovell-smith@press.co.nz or write to The Press, Private Bag 4722, Christchurch. Items for inclusion in this column should be in no later than 5pm Sunday.



Ligularia leaves and muscari make a pretty groundcover while Kate Foster...

For Kate Foster, it took time to see the beauty in the sprawling garden of Terrace Station, writes Mary Lovell-Smith.

Some 150 years ago, the first trees were planted in the garden of Terrace Station at Hororata. Four generations of the Hall family have since tended them; for the last 42 years, Kate and Richard Foster have had the responsibility, or privilege, as Kate sees it.

"The strength of this garden is its trees," she says. For Kate, who was brought up on the farm, real appreciation of them and the garden which sprawls beneath was a long time coming.

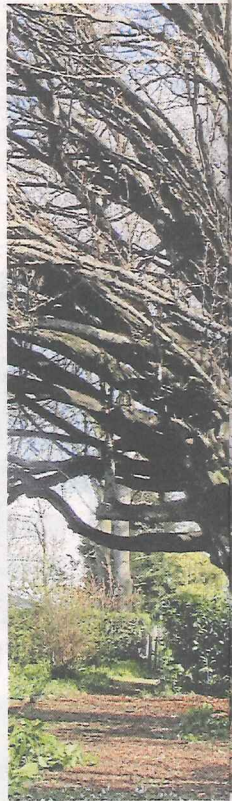
It was a conversation with garden historian Thelma Strongman that opened her eyes to its beauty, she says.

"She made me appreciate the garden; she said it was the garden she loved most."

Thelma had thought it might have been designed by prominent nurseryman and landscaper Alfred Buxton, who was responsible for many Canterbury gardens in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

However, Kate's subsequent research revealed it was more likely to have been the work of a farm labourer and later gardener in the employment of her great-grandfather, John Hall, runholder, politician and premier of New Zealand from 1879 to 1882.

Local lore has it that the farm





neath the trees

er pauses beneath a massive hornbeam, most probably planted in her great-grandfather's day.



labourer, Thomas Barson, trained at Kew Gardens. "Though I can't verify that," Kate says.

Kate believes the garden lost its way during the Depression and World War II, when labour was short. Her mother, with help from an employee, planted shrubs, some of which have become what is now a tapestry hedge – a pretty arrangement of white, pink and apricot japonicas and forsythia.

The garden's layout was hard to discern when Kate and Richard took over the 500-hectare farm in 1971. The garden was overgrown. "There were no vistas, but once I started clearing the undergrowth I could start to see the defined plan of it – the four rooms, defined by laurel hedges."

Ten years ago, Kate launched Operation Tree Trunks: "So I could see the forms of the trees. They are magnificent," she says warmly, patting one. Now, against the lower trunks of the towering elms, sycamores, oaks,

Portuguese laurels and a magnificent hornbeam, grows a lush woodland garden. Thoughtfully planted, it is seldom without interest whatever the season and, being densely planted, weeds don't have much of a chance – not even the persistent sycamore seedlings, which the eagle-eyed Kate can spot from metres away.

The bed of celandine, for example, is admired for its sunny yellow blooms in winter when not much else is in flower. Come spring, Kate rips off the glossy green leaves to reveal the unfurling hosta shoots which will flower and continue to look good till summer's end.

"There's no bare soil, just ground cover," Kate explains, before a bed which contains colchicums, for autumn; daffodils for spring; and tiarella for the summer. Nor do weeds get a chance to break through the dense matt of yellow comfrey growing at the base of huge trees, Kate points out.

Elsewhere, other combinations



Her mother, with help from an employee, planted shrubs, some of which have become what is now a tapestry hedge – a pretty arrangement of white, pink and apricot japonicas and forsythia.

include bluebells, daylilies, tiger lilies; snowdrops are followed by lily of the valley; and a fetching dark variety of muscari is surrounded by hellebores and aubergine-coloured ligularia leaves. Violets and primroses spread wantonly; a small viola forms a foaming sea of yellow.

Apart from three hours a week help in the garden and someone to do the extensive hedges, Kate does the garden all herself. For her, mowing the lawns – on a ride-on mower – is rest time and a chance to look and plan.

Each area has a major clear out twice a year, though Kate seldom uses a hoe.

"It's a deadly weapon! It kills off seedlings!" she says, throwing up her hands in horror. Despite the garden's already expansive size, Kate has plans for more. "The land lends itself to natural plantings," she says.

"It's funny," she reflects, "through natural disasters, floods, snowstorms, winds, drought, the house was my refuge; when the quakes came along the garden became my refuge."

In the storm of September 10, the Terrace Station farm lost more than 200 trees, including a 30-metre, 150 year-old *Quercus canariensis* and many other huge oaks in the woodland. Although the woodland walk is now shorter, visitors are invited to the next open days on October 13 and November 10, between 1.30pm and 4pm, Adults \$5. Children free. For details go to terracestation.org.nz.

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