

“Lincoln University campus: a guide to some of the shrubs currently growing there”



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The purpose of this book is to illustrate some of the range of shrubs currently grown on the Lincoln University campus. There are also a few trees that were not covered in the 1st book. This should be read in conjunction with its companion - "Lincoln University campus - a guide to some of the trees currently growing there" (April 2008).

This also is a first draft and hopefully there will be further editions that will add species to address some of the obvious gaps.

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Cover image: *Clanthus puniceus* (kaka beak)

“Lincoln University campus: a guide to some of the shrubs currently growing there”

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As with the first book “Lincoln University campus – a guide to some of the trees currently growing there” (April 2008) the purpose of this guide is primarily to increase the awareness for those people who are interested in plants of the Lincoln University campus. At this point in time the list is incomplete and it is my intention to hopefully add others at a later date. In this second book I have largely concentrated on shrubs and in some instances have included a few trees that were not covered in the first book. Documenting what is currently growing on the campus provides some sort of historical record and possibly the basis for some thoughts around future planting options.

The logic of species chosen is simply those that have generally been easiest for me to deal with at this point, as identification becomes more difficult then the output will invariably slow. From my perspective the greater the numbers of plants identified in the first instance will give those that wish to know what is available the most information. At some stage it will be appropriate to repackage the contents of each book to reflect a more logical arrangement of plants.

The future problems in adding further shrubs will be in being certain I have correctly named a cultivar or hybrid from some of the large and complex groups such as *Rhododendron*, *Camellia*, *Phormium*, *Pittosporum*, *Coprosma*, *Hebe* and other genera where a large amount of hybridization and selection of cultivars has occurred. Other areas such as those of dwarf conifers will also be a challenge. The difficulty with these groups is generally related to a lack of plant keys or sufficiently detailed up to date information to make a correct judgement. Information from nursery catalogues is to some extent useful, but often lacks the precise detail needed. Dan Dennehy of the Grounds Section has been a valuable source of information in relation to what has been purchased more recently and his general horticultural knowledge is also very helpful in relation to camellias and rhododendrons – an area where I freely admit to having a limited knowledge. I accept therefore that there may be errors, hopefully no more than possibly at the cultivar level, but would appreciate any guidance if you think there is an error.

During the late 1970's and 1980's planting lists were kept by the Grounds staff. The numbers of plants suggested that the area of the Grounds was either expanding, or that plants were being cut out to be replaced with new plants. I am not certain that the former was true, nor was it particularly obvious that the latter was occurring on a large scale. In short, there was no equivalent of a balance sheet available, what was coming out to make way for the apparently endless lists of plants being planted?

From those planting lists it appears as though all is well and presents a picture of a healthy variety of plants that are part of the campus diversity, as indeed they are. I frequently hear from visiting staff, post graduate and other students from other countries that comment favourably on the range of plants at Lincoln compared with what they might expect to see in their own countries. However, from my observations shrubs that have survived well for many years without causing any apparent concern can just suddenly disappear and over time the balance of plants available can alter without being noticed by most. These shifts often seem to be based on the whim of individuals and that can be frustrating for those who might rely on their continued presence for teaching materials and so on. How many people on campus today are aware that *Brugmansia*, *Calycanthus*, *Crotalaria*, *Dais*, *Dregea*, *Eutaxia*, *Erythrina*, *Fremontodendron*, *Prunus padus* and so on once grew and flourished on the campus often in carefully selected sites? These and others have disappeared for some reason, none have been replaced. Does that matter? Would it matter if these were books from a library or

chemicals from a lab? There are a number of reasons why plants disappear. Explanations from Grounds staff have suggested it is frequently as a result of alcohol fuelled student hijinks damaging plants, that later need to be removed. Other examples I have been shown have been because of tradesmen who have simply cut down shrubs that are deemed too close to buildings. Occasionally it appears as though plants have been stolen, as often the plants missing are what I would consider the more interesting or “choice” horticultural specimens. In other instances it has been when a decision has been made to “tidy up” an area, recent consequences of that have seen whole areas of plants removed to be replanted with common plants that add little in return to the diversity that did exist. Other reasons have been due to interest groups based on philosophical imperatives that can override logical decisions made for horticultural reasons.

There is also the issue of changes in personnel in charge of the Grounds over time that may have little understanding of the history of the Grounds plantings or their purposes for being there.

The Grounds section is part of a wider group including maintenance staff that look after the buildings, tradesmen such as carpenters, plumbers, electricians and the like. The other main group are the cleaning staff, all with important functions in the care, maintenance and presentation of the campus. Up until the late 1970's the Grounds operated under the direction of the Department of Horticulture and later became part of the Buildings and Services when the late John Taylor (a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Horticulture) became unwell for a period of time around 1978. Whilst part of the Department of Horticulture, the Grounds section both maintained the Grounds and planted and managed materials required for teaching. The changeover was also at a time when a programme of new buildings was about to be embarked upon for a period of years associated with an increase in student numbers and new courses.

I am unsure of what the philosophy of the current grounds staff is? One assumes however that it is largely cost driven and based upon care and maintenance of the grounds associated with an acceptable appearance. What is not clear is how plant materials are chosen or retained. Perhaps, whatever the philosophy is, it could be extended so that the Grounds staff could also be seen as the curators of plant collections that involved more than just a tidying and maintenance function, they could also be the “plant librarians”. By that, I mean they could be charged with recording planting detail, labelling plants and ensuring that when a plant is removed for what ever reason there is another available example of that plant somewhere else on campus. They might also be expected to liaise with a Campus Committee that has an overview of the current and future directions for the plant resources. There is currently no obvious accountability for what is planted and what is removed.

Attempts have been made to set up Campus Committees in the past by various people, but for various reasons these groups have largely been ineffective. The Grounds staff deal with a number of requests that often occur without reference to a wider philosophical approach that might help. In the last twenty years or so there has been a definite drive toward a wider representation of New Zealand native plants on campus. There are areas where these have been planted that appear to be unsuitable, and other areas which have markedly improved. An overview of where particular types of plants should be appropriately sited could help. It should not be taken for granted either that all plants on campus have been deliberately planted. There are many examples of large plants that have established themselves naturally as seedlings and have become the dominant plants of some areas.

I repeat much of the following from the earlier book on campus trees and simply substitute **shrubs**. For some people shrubs can also be a learning resource, much like a library of books is for others. In a library, books of course have a title and are classified in order that they can easily be found. From there it is up to the individual as to what they may wish to

find out from the contents. Currently plants at Lincoln are known by some at different levels of correctness, but for the majority providing the equivalent of a title and where you might find them may be a useful starting point, from there people can choose to learn what they may want to know about the plants. Labelling shrubs is another option, but for now, this should be seen for what it is - a starting point for those who wish to find out more.

Hilgendorf is reputed to have said "the field is my laboratory" that should still at least partly true for all land based subjects. The function of the Grounds Department at Lincoln is very important and if this can serve to help them promote and protect the resource we have for all sorts of purposes that can include teaching, research and the promotional values to the general public, then the time spent on this will have been useful. It can also be the start of future plans which can rationally look at the resource that is already here and how it can be improved, what gaps there are that this and subsequent lists identify and assist planning.

Shrubs offer many opportunities to learn about the environment around us. There are many examples of both exotic and native species on campus. Shrubs and trees generally make the environment we spend much of our time amongst more pleasant. Bernatsky (1978) made some very important points in his book 'Tree ecology and preservation' not just about aesthetics and the common values we all appreciate, but values associated with the cooling effect of trees, their ability to humidify the air, to reduce pollutants from the air and many other desirable qualities trees contribute to a better environment. Shrubs have many of the same qualities.

It is important and sometimes forgotten that shrubs and other plants have to fit in with a greatly modified environment, changed by the incorporation of drainage, roads, paths and buildings. Associated with that are the expectations many people have that their working space is not shaded and the simple pleasures people get from plants that reflect the changing of the seasons.

There are some simple truths about shrubs that are worth considering. I have listed a few briefly only. Shrubs require time and space to grow well, many are expected to live for decades and possibly centuries. Planting plans and objectives are useful for incorporating shrubs into the landscape if they are to survive long term. Shrubs are not necessarily the perfect form and may need some training or corrective pruning especially when they are young. Good, well selected shrubs and proper initial training will pay dividends in terms of longevity.

Maintenance of shrubs is important. Many can be pruned if they become too large or leggy, or better still pruned to the required size and maintained at that. This does however require adequate staff numbers and appropriate skill levels to achieve this. Simply clearing the whole area when plants outgrow the site may appear to be the obvious solution, but in the past proper pruning by trained horticulturists also worked. Sometimes it appears that pruning is often only valued when carried out at ground level and the whole area is cleared and replanted, often with completely different and poorer plants than were there originally. Cynically, this could be considered a valuable management option for reducing costs and allowing certain areas to exist only for the time period before they outgrow the site. Obvious advantages are that good horticultural skills are not needed, plant selection is unimportant and between planting and removal when plants outgrow the area, you need only to provide the effect of tidiness.

A regular management plan for the maintenance of shrubs should be part of any good grounds maintenance plan. Knowledge about maintenance should be based on an understanding of how they shrubs grow, the wood they flower on, what they are and how big they might be expected to grow. We have the basis of a very good campus, based on the work carried out by those that went before. It is important that we value that good plant

selection as part of the overall design and should also value well trained staff in the Grounds to carry this out.

The list of shrubs has been something I have built up over the years. Other lists of plants planted in the grounds have occasionally come my way from various grounds staff, particularly from Martin Capstick in the 1980's, but more often than not I have discovered new plants planted and old plants gone on visits around the grounds. I often wonder why?

In 2006 Michael Smetham approached me to write some notes about a few trees on campus to fit in with a publication previously covering art works. I did this and eventually contributed information for twenty eight trees into a "Visitors Guide to Artworks, Buildings and Trees on the Lincoln University Campus" published in 2007. However in the process of writing that material I wrote about significantly more trees than were ultimately required and from that decided that perhaps I should simply continue. Dick Lucas encouraged me to do so and Carol Brandenburg offered to print a few copies in colour, but requested what I have covered so far now, suggesting I could finish the trees and shrubs not included here at a later date. In April 2008 five copies of Campus trees were printed, three of which are in the Library, Professor Jordan has a copy and I have a copy. The book is available on the web at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10182/472>

From that point I have continued documenting shrubs on Lincoln Campus, the trees book should be seen as a companion to this. As with the trees book this is incomplete and leaves opportunities for further work. Opportunities include possible GPS locations, more precise planting dates, growth rates of trees at Lincoln and fuller botanical descriptions, however I hope that this accepted for what it is - an incomplete, but useful starting point. All of the photographs are my own, taken with a DSC Sony H7 digital camera which does have some limitations, but is convenient. I wish to acknowledge Roger Dawson for converting the document files to PDF, and for adding them to the Lincoln University Research Archive.

It might be useful to briefly consider what a shrub is here before proceeding.
Some definitions:

Shrubs are

"Shrubs are perennial plants with many persistent woody stems from or near the base. If the woody part is confined to the lower portion of the plant while the upper shoots are soft, the term sub-shrub is applied" Synge, P. (1956). Shrubs are generally smaller than trees and do not have a single trunk, but there are always examples that prove the exception.

A tree is...

"A woody plant that produces one main trunk and a more or less distinct and elevated crown" Staff of Bailey Hortorum (1976)

"A woody, perennial plant with a single main stem, generally branching at some distance from the ground and possessing a more or less distinct, elevated crown" Huxley, Griffiths, Levy. (1992)

"A tree is a plant that stands of itself and can be climbed in" Haller (1977)

Woody climbing plants

"Climbing plants ascend toward the light by using other objects for support" Synge, P. (1956)

The following references have been used in a general sense or to check species names or identification. I have also frequently used Google to check a cultivar or species name. This option needs to be used with caution as some images are clearly wrongly named.

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