

# Friends

botanic travels.  
Around Australia and the world.



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Friends of  
Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens Inc.

# Tromso – the most northern botanic garden in the world

Lyn and Peter Reilly

On a cold wet morning in early August last year - 2018, we four Reilly's ventured into the world's most northerly botanic garden at Tromso, above the Arctic Circle in Norway. We were on our way from the Faroe and Lofoten islands and were heading for Svalbard and Iceland.

Like our Gold Coast garden, the Tromso Botanic Garden is situated on the site of an old farm. Its last owner, Ms Hansine Hansen, donated parts of the farm to educational purposes in 1938 and the remaining parts to the County of Tromso on her death in 1947. Large parts of the University of Tromso as well as the local high school are located on this property. Ms Hansen's farm site is now partly reconstructed. An old house was removed from downtown Tromso to the site of the main house and in 2002 was renovated according to the original. The Friends of the Tromso Botanic Garden have made a tremendous effort to develop a café here, now taken over by the Museum Shop (not open when we were there). They sell plants from their nursery – with an honesty sign for when it is not staffed. The Gardens are open 24 hours a day and entry is free.



While many Australian botanic gardens specialise in indigenous plants (as ours does) many in Europe specialise in one genus or family or another. One of Tromso's specialities is the Saxifragaceae Family, claiming perhaps the largest **outdoor** collection of these species in the world. The sixty-odd species and cultivars range from densely-flowering evergreen cushion plants to mossy or silver-leafed plants. Tromso's speciality is the yellow-flowered Ciliatae Section with about 20 species impossible to grow in southern gardens.



*Peter and our son Andrew at one of the saxifrage rockery sections.*

The Pyramidal Saxifrage (*S. cotyledon*) was chosen as one of Norway's national plants in the 1930s (the other is Purple Heather); another beauty is *S. kolenatiana* pictures below.



The other main group of flowering Tromsø specialities are the Primulaceae. Most primulas like long winters and cool summers and so do well here. These pictured are originally from Sichuan, China.



As we have found in other cold climates like Macquarie Island, some plants become gigantic – as the meadowsweet towering over Peter



and the large leaves beside this garden shed.



The beautiful blue flowered *Meconopsis baileyi* (Himalayan Poppy, below) is somewhat of a highlight at Tromso. As a footpath decoration, it shows the way from the cruise port in town to the Garden's entry. (We fell in love with this flower during our Botanic Gardens tour of England with Kate a few years ago



*The real flower*



*Footpath marker (L)*

The Gardens are also home to pastel colours of delphiniums, gentians and peonies (L, C, R) and a children's play area.



#### Notes:

- Prior to the establishment of the Tromso Gardens, the town of Kirovsk in Russia was the world's most northerly. When Tromso's Garden opened, the Kirovsk Garden donated three species for Tromso's spring flower displays -from South Siberia, East Siberia and the Caucasus.
- At these high latitudes north of the Arctic Circle, the climate is largely determined by ocean currents, being either cold from the north, or mild from the south. Greenland (cold currents) has arctic tundra well south of the Arctic Circle while Norway with its warm Gulf Stream has forests of trees much further north.

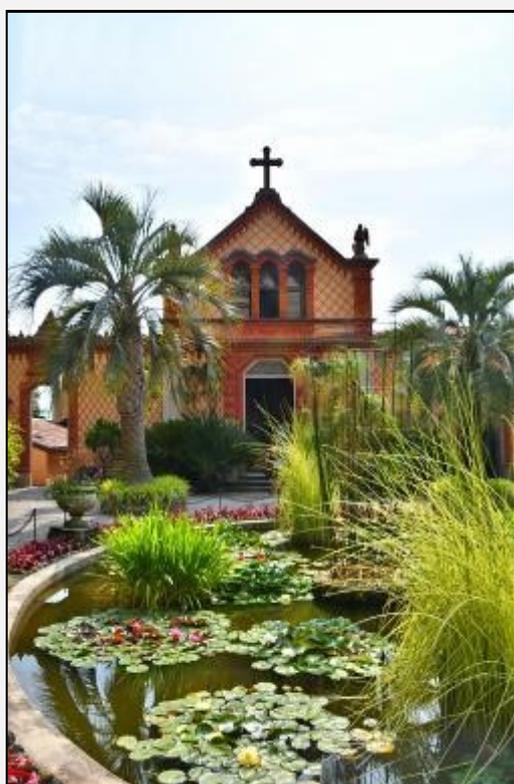
## Isola Madre, Italy

Leanne Ware

In June 2018 I travelled to Italy for two weeks immersing myself in Italian history, culture, food - and, of course, wine!

While negotiating the roads and towns in the north and south of the country I saw well-kept gardens both domestic and provincial. I continually discovered many new plants and surprisingly many plants I was familiar with. One garden proved a wonderful example of how plants and trees from areas far away can be successfully grown.

In northern Italy, Isola Madre is located in Lake Maggiore adjacent to the town of Stresa. This island is one of three Borromean Islands that includes Isola Bella and Isola dei Pescatori. It is the largest of the islands with a width of 220 metres and length of 330 metres with a surface area of 7.8 hectares.



One large opulent Baroque style building now a museum is the original family residence Palazzo Borromeo, and nearby, a neo-Gothic sepulchral chapel with elegant terracotta decoration is located adjacent to a circular pond filled with lilies, reeds and irises.

The gardens were started in 1501 by Lancillotto Borromeo when he

introduced citrus fruit, followed by olives. The gardens progressed under Count Vitaliano IX Borromeo, a passionate botanist

and in the nineteenth century evolved into a landscaped botanical garden.

The Botanic Gardens of Isola Madre have continued to evolve in the style of an English garden, with the climate favouring many tropical plants and exotic flowers.

A stone stairway - the

'Stairway of the Dead' is covered in Wisteria.





The gardens boast the oldest Cypress in Europe, a 200 year old Kashmir Cypress in front of the Palazzo that was uprooted by a tornado in 2006, and is now upright and secured and growing strong.

The island is also famous for many brightly coloured birds along with blue and pure white peacocks that roam the island.



The gardens were a delight to experience, and during my time wandering around I found Australian plants *Leptospermum liversidgei* and *Eucalyptus pulverulenta*, showing that you are never too far from home!

# Garden Travels - a year of contrasts      Kate Heffernan

Throughout my career I have been fortunate to travel to gardens across several continents, savouring the beauty, the plants, the design, the function and the detail. I visited dozens of gardens in 2018 and the first half of 2019. Here's just a few!

My first stop in this short travelogue was 8 days spent in Kyoto in October 2018. Early Autumn, expecting climate change to bring the colours out sooner than usual, so heading off a few weeks before the guide books recommendations. Bingo – great idea. Accommodation less expensive, and crowds not too bad! Gardens stunning!

Everything about Japanese gardens has intrigued and inspired me since Uni days. My Landscape design lecturer David Grubb was one of a team who brought the Toowoomba Japanese gardens to life. A fabulous teacher.

Immersing myself in Kyoto and its gardens and culture was a life highlight.



Getting around was so easy. A bus took me to within a few hundred metres of Kyoto Botanical Garden. Quiet, serene and with a plant collection which focuses on many groups of plants from one Genera. The glasshouse was massive and had plants I had never seen. I also visited gardens I had read about in text books. They were close to perfect ,the highlight was in the detail.





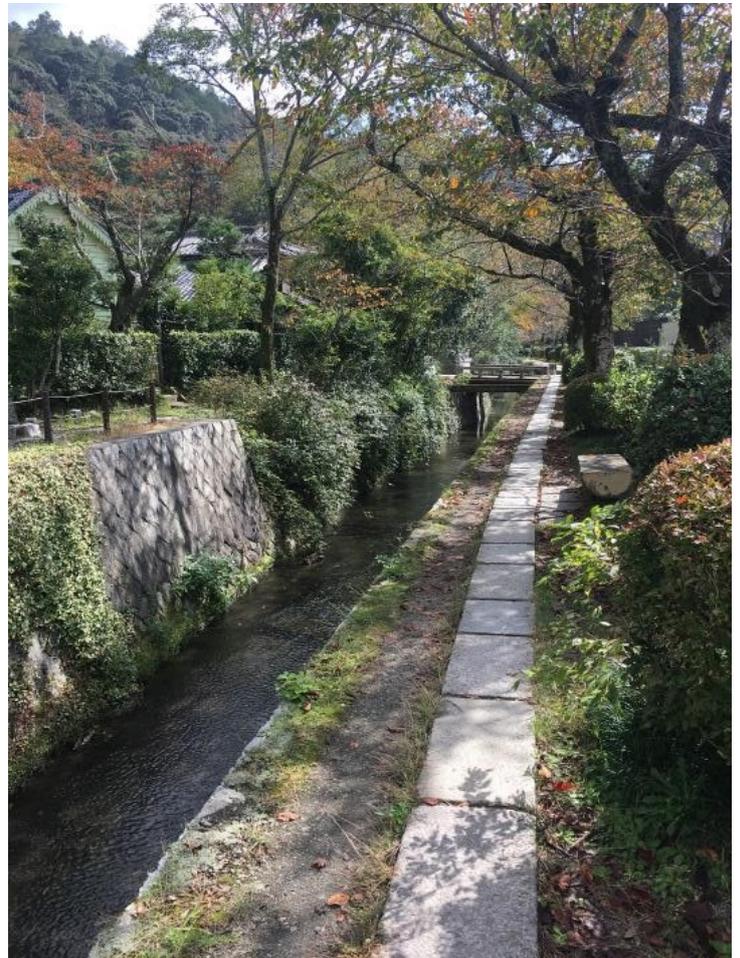
I was moved by the reverence for every plant. Discreet, natural protection for them all.



I spent a while speaking with a volunteer at the Friends of the Forest, admiring their beautiful craft, and delicate moss collection. There had been a huge typhoon a few weeks before I arrived and the forest had a fair bit of damage. The repairs were being done by volunteers and City of Kyoto officers. Walking tracks were closed. But the essence of the landscape was evident at every stop along the Philosopher's Path.



This tiny canal was almost outside the door of our accommodation. Along each side were narrow, beautifully manicured garden beds.



The tree lined canal along the Philosopher's Path.

Across the Tasman in December for the New Zealand Flower and Garden Show, before a week of travel to wild areas and gardens on the North Island.



This is just one of the wonderful designer gardens created for the show.

An award of a Gold Medal is very special!



Best in Show !



New Zealand Collection at Auckland Botanic Gardens.

A wet and windy day, but still the collection was perfect in every way.

The city of Hamilton has a population of around 150,000. The Hamilton Gardens bring visitors from across the globe to an outstanding collection of 'garden rooms' representing design styles from across the globe.



If you can't get to the world's gardens—get to Hamilton Gardens.



Rosemoor, Royal Horticultural Society Gardens in North Devon. Lovely streams, woody hollows for wildlife in ancient walnut trees, tulips species which I never imagined existed, and a view through a Eucalypt.



Landscape serenity and whimsy. A reflecting lake and a woolly cover for the hard working wheelbarrow.



Situated in the gentle rolling country of east Auckland, Ayrilies is one of New Zealand's best known gardens. Characterised by sweeping lawns and informal but detailed plantings by ponds and waterways, it has been described as the quintessential New Zealand garden.

## Cornwall, North Devon, Cork and Kerry



My path through the lands of my ancestors was as soft and welcoming as this mossy track in a Cornwall garden

Generations of the same family have gardened in this sheltered valley in Cornwall.



Succulents planted for survival at St Michaels Mount Island garden at Marazion. No land, just salt laden wind between the garden and North America.



South West Ireland -  
A special gem on the island of  
Ireland filled with beauty,  
mystery and history.



Nothing I do with my camera equals the beauty of the wild landscapes and the gardens of Cork and Kerry. Every garden seems to have a view that takes my breath away.

I wonder if 5 generations back my 4 times removed great grandfather, John Richard Heffernan, an estate gardener in County Cork, has passed on to me a genetic link to love of landscape.

Although not their careers, my Dad and Grandad looked for, and worked towards special beauty in gardens and landscapes. My son does the same now.

I just know that I am entranced by the beauty of a carefully and lovingly laid out garden.

Thanks for looking and reading my journeys of the last 12 months.....

I am working towards an Irish Garden tour for spring 2019. A small group tour (6 -12 people) should be ready soon. *Just ask for details.*

*Kate*

## Friends Travelogue

This travelogue, our first, is the work of dedicated members of the communications group of the Friends of the Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens Inc. We welcome and encourage you to consider putting your words and photos of your garden travels together and sending to us.

It is intended that as the collection of issues increases so will our knowledge of gardens around the world and encourage others to follow in our footsteps.

- \* In this issue we have the Reillys traveling to the extreme north of our world and nearby areas
- \* Leanne Ware with her camera of course, in Italy
- \* Kate Heffernan giving us an extremely interesting look at Japanese gardens, New Zealand, English and Irish places of amazing beauty.



The Judas Tree - *Cercis siliquatum* in flower at Clovelly Court Walled Garden - the last stop on my 7 day hike in North Devon. The garden is sheltered and the mild influence of the Gulf Stream allows tender plants like this small deciduous tree from Western Asia and Southern Europe to grow. This tree is possibly almost 90 years old as the garden was planted in 1930.

Friends



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