



## Southland Herb Society's *Herbal Harvest*

### This Month

Thursday 25th November

**5PM start**

Christmas Garden tour  
and progressive dinner

See notice board on page 11  
for further details



*A photo from our archives: November 2010.*

*A table setting created by Rachel Reed which was one of many inspirational Christmas ideas she demonstrated for us that evening.*

### This Month's Highlights

- **President's monthly report**
- **Growing micro greens with Benji**
- **Herb of the night - Fennel**
- **Annual President's report**
- **Rosebowl**
- **Profile - Maggie Elford**

### *A message from your editor*

And so to the final newsletter for the year. And what a busy year it has been. You can read about all the activities our society has managed to achieve in Julianne's Annual President's report. Considering how the rest of the world has been for much of it with Covid 19, as well as parts of our own good country, I think we can count ourselves remarkably fortunate.

The October meeting sounds like lots of fun as well as being informative. Pauline has written the report about our guest speaker, Benji who was also recently seen on Country Calendar. You can read about this on pages 3 and 4.

Jan has written a very detailed report about fennel on pages 8 and 9. This is a herb that grows wild in Central Otago and in fact many parts of the country making it a good forageable plant.

This month's newsletter is being sent out a little earlier than usual so please make sure that you get the correct date for the final meeting which is a Progressive dinner and garden tour. All of the information you need is on the notice board.

Make I take this opportunity to wish you all very happy family times this festive season. Remember you can always take a photo or two of interesting plants or gardens you may see. There may even be a good story in it for our 2022 editions of the newsletter!!!  
Yours in herbs

*Maggie*

## FRIENDS

IT'S THE *friends*

WE MEET  
ALONG THE WAY  
THAT HELPS US  
APPRECIATE THE

*journey*

## President's Report

Hello Everyone

It was great to see so many of you as well as new members at our and wasn't Benji an inspiration! It was wonderful to experience his enthusiasm and motivation. He is obviously such a clever person the way he has designed the equipment that supports the growing of the micro greens. It just shows what can be done.

Thank you to the committee for re-standing and to Rose for coming on the committee. I really appreciate the support and teamwork. Thank you also to Jan, Pauline, and Jenne for organising the AGM night, the Herb of the night, the display and supper.

We are thinking of Sue Ferguson who lost her precious husband Don recently.

Last week we were up in Wedderburn for friends 80th birthdays even though they were 74! They don't think they will make 80 so we decided to celebrate while they are fit and healthy. Anyway we had a lovely time exploring Ophir, Oturehua, Becks and Naseby. The thyme was all over the hills: such fragrance and beauty. Also the Becks hotel has four to five rooms full of antiques!

I have put all the information about the Christmas progressive dinner in the noticeboard section of this newsletter and I look forward to seeing you there.

As this is the last newsletter for the year I would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and holiday period and thank you all for your involvement in our herb society.



Julianne



**An evening with Benji Biswas (“CRUNCHY”)**  
*Reported by Pauline Lee*

Benji’s journey started when he arrived in Invercargill in 2013 from India wearing shorts, a t-shirt and sandals in the middle of winter with \$200 in his pocket. SIT and a John White Sports and Academic Scholarship lured Benji to move to this side of the world which allowed him to play cricket while studying. When he finished his studies he worked at Stadium Southland as the Rock Climber supervisor and he also did voluntary work for Rugby Southland.

After watching a documentary about food wastage two years ago, and being passionate about food Benji and his partner who were expecting a baby at the time, wanted to be self-sufficient and decided to:

- Work for themselves;
- Had a limited amount of money;
- and loved experimenting with seeds.

This documentary prompted Benji to grow microgreens and sprouts and while Southland not being conducive to reliable weather conditions, Benji established a farm in a garage on his property. His aim was to take pesticides out of farming, and to tackle the food wastage whilst transporting microgreens from the North Island to supermarkets/restaurants in Invercargill. This took five days and they ended up being soggy microgreens on our shelves. Hence “CRUNCHY” evolved and Benji is Founder/Director of CRUNCHY.

Benji went on to say he was determined to make his business succeed and trialled his new venture. He bought seeds from a nursery, some compost, set up a table in his garage and began experimenting. After the second day he knew he could grow microgreens. He had no experience as a farmer, never had been a grower (although previously an electronics and instrumentation engineer) has built his own grower machine. At the time local businesses had no local suppliers of fresh crunchy greens.

You-Tube became his educator and with a \$5,000 overdraft, pushed Benji to succeed. From one or two customers at the beginning he now has forty five supermarkets and restaurants he supplies on a regular basis. He said he has grown the business to a point where it provides him with an income, but also allowed him to recruit a part-time employee and another casual part-timer. He is certified by New Zealand Good Agriculture Practice, which required an audit by Assure Quality and has now been approved by the Foodstuffs group to supply their stores.



When COVID-19 hit New Zealand he was able to access the Management Capability Fund which gave him the opportunity to achieve different ways to diversify his business. Foodstuffs helped save wastage of more than 2000 punnets of herbs, sprouts and microgreens for some of its stores. Since lockdown, Benji has changed his strategy slightly, wanting to create a 100% waste-free sustainable business and he is well on the way to achieving that goal.

Benji's humour throughout the evening plus his determination and tenacity towards the success of his business certainly made for an interesting and fun evening. Benji enjoyed his meeting with us "Herbies" so much he wanted a photo taken with all the "lovely ladies" so he could forward on to his Mum.

<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/country-calendar/episodes/s2021-e26>



### President's report Southland Herb Society 2020-2021

I present the 2020-2021 AGM report with a great sense of satisfaction in our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Despite the interruptions of Covid 19 together we have achieved an amazing amount.

We have had a focus on three projects this year.

The first was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner and celebration with Jane Wigglesworth as our speaker. It was an amazing night made special by the occasion, the fragrant Tussie Mussie displays on every table and around the room as well as the great company. It was special to have current and previous members present to remember past times and appreciate the speaker. Thank you Christine for your help with the organisation and everyone for your input.



Our second project was our Spring Festival of Herbs on the 9-10 October and we spent the year working towards it. We had two committees running for the year: the regular committee of ten and the festival committee of ten. Members began propagating plants in earnest. Five of our meetings focused on making crafts towards the festival, pot pourri, Christmas decorations, decorating candles, embroidery rabbits and birds and egg carton roses as well as

labelling preserves and goods. The embroidery group separately made other items as well as helping us. Members indicated what they wanted to help with and the displays and stalls they would plan for. We had displays of an Apothecary, Embroidery, Granny's kitchen, Native herbs, Foraging, Herbs and their uses, Lavender, Alice's bedroom, a tribute to Life Members and Lyn Henry's paintings and Companion Planting. Stalls were Bric a Brac, Rachel Reed Vintage, Plants, Baking, Lavender, Tussie Mussies, Tuffa pots and Crafts. The Brown Owl's tea room operated with Devonshire teas and a tray competition. The set up was huge, it took some of us all day but it was worth it to see the visual sensation! The community loved it and came in droves. All our members participated in the way they could which was very pleasing. The clean up only took an hour and a half due to all our husbands and partners. A wonderful weekend where everyone worked together for a common purpose and in the process got to know each other better and learnt from each other. We also made a good profit around \$10,000. which will be put to good use.

The third project was redoing the Fragrant garden at the Blind and Low Vision Centre at Queen's Park. The purpose was to try to create what was originally planned and planted by Jean Young and Olive Dunn and others 37 years ago. We had working bees to dig the garden and replant with Fragrant plants and herbs. It was a major exercise to source the plants as well as re do the garden. It took a lot of planning, energy and enthusiasm. Thank you everyone who helped.



As well we did a display at the library to promote Herb Awareness Month and a talk on Herbs to the Horticultural Society. The Embroidery group continued to meet monthly and create things for the festival as well as other beautiful objects.

The programme we have delivered has been varied including an Antique road show with Nicol MacFarlane, Cosmetics with herbs with Ainslie Stevens, Roses are red, an evening with Herbs as well as Christmas at Shona Tippet's with Pauline Lee's Christmas in Germany and a Winter themed Mid Winter Dinner.



We have had great numbers of current and new members at meetings. Our society is growing and we now have well over fifty members which is very pleasing.



The Herb of the night continued to be an important part of the programme and over the year members have researched Lemon Balm, Parsley, Roses, Wineberry, Penny Royal Mint, Santolina among others. Thank you for all your efforts with the herb of the night. putting so much knowledge and preparation into the presentation.

We need to get more profiles of our members in our monthly newsletters as members so enjoy learning about other members by sharing our stories. Thank you Ainslie for the work you are doing on our archives. It is important for our society.

Thank you to Betty, Avis, our secretary Jane, Margaret our treasurer for the festival, Norma, Christine, Chris, Rose, Lyn, Rosemary and Judith who were the festival committee. You all worked hard along with the display and stalls people to make the festival a success.

A special mention of Jane Jones our wonderful secretary who has had an enormous workload this year and has done it so willingly. Thank you Jane. Also thank you Gillian for your treasurer's work and Maggie for putting together our special newsletter. Your work is much appreciated.

Thank you finally to all the wonderful Herb Committee of Gillian, Maggie, Jane, Norma, Jude, Rosemary, Sue, Jan and Jackie who all do so much to make our society run at each meeting. We are so privileged to have people who are so willing to give their time, energy and their expertise to enhance our group. Next year will be easier I promise.

Please find someone to be the president in October 2022.

Julianne Watson



## Southland Herb Society Rosebowl Rosemary Brown

The Rosebowl is awarded to someone who has made a significant contribution to our society over the last year in particular. This year the Rosebowl is being awarded to someone who has worked so hard for our Society over the last year and more. She has been a member for four years and has been on the committee also since she joined in 2017.

The Rosebowl is awarded to Rosemary Brown.. She has been on both the regular Herb Society committee and the Festival committee in the last year and made a great contribution. She is always volunteers to take on extra responsibilities when we have speakers or events. You all saw Rosemary's floral displays and arrangements at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner. You also saw the beautiful entrance and hallway at our Spring Festival of Herbs that were commented on by everyone who came. She adds the magic touch.

Rosemary propagated hundreds of plants for the festival and even created a covered area to hurry the plants along. She made the Tuffa pots along with Amanda and grew the plants to fill them including lots of cacti and pansies. We can all know the wonderful effort Rosemary puts into what she does and the nights she leads. The egg carton roses and the Antique road show come to mind.

Rosemary will often come along with a Tussie Mussie for a speaker or even a cake. She is thoughtful, caring and helps others.

Thank you Rosemary for your expertise, your willingness to share your skills and the way you make things happen. Getting the bike and gym walker into your van is an example!

You so deserve the Rosebowl this year.

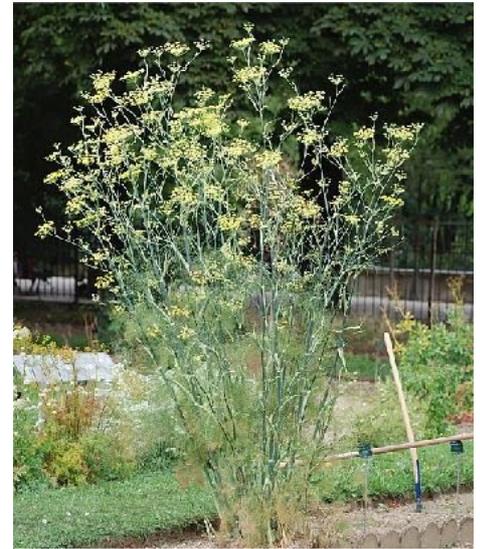
**Southland Herb Society**



**Herb of the night: Fennel, *Foeniculum vulgare***  
*Researched and presented by Jan Pfeifer*

Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) is a flowering plant species in the carrot family. It is a hardy perennial herb with yellow flowers and feathery leaves. It is indigenous to the shores of the Mediterranean but has become widely naturalised in many parts of the world, especially in the dry soils near the sea-coast and on river beds.

It is highly aromatic and flavourful herb used in cooking and, along with the similar tasting anise, is one of the primary ingredients of absinthe. Florence fennel or "finocchio" is a selection with a swollen, bulb-like stem base that is used as a vegetable.



The word fennel developed from Middle English "fenel".

Fennel was prized by the ancient Greeks and Romans who used it as a medicine, food, and insect repellent. A fennel tea was believed to give courage to the warriors prior to battle. The Greek name for fennel is marathos and the place of the famous battle of Marathon literally means "a plain with fennel."

As Old English "finule" is one of the nine plants invoked in the pagan Anglo-Saxon "Nine Herb Charm" recorded in the 10th century.

Longfellow's 1842 poem "The Goblet of Life" repeatedly refers to the plant and mentions its purported ability to strengthen eyesight:

Above the lower plants it towers,  
 The Fennel with its yellow flowers.

And in an earlier age than ours  
 Was gifted with the wondrous powers  
 Lost vision to restore.

Fennel, is a perennial herb. It is erect, glaucous green, and grows to heights of up to 2.5 metres with hollow stems. The leaves grow up to 40 centimetres long; they are finely dissected with the ultimate segments threadlike about 0.5 millimetres wide. The flowers are produced in terminal compound umbels 5-15 centimetres wide, each umbel section having 20-50 tiny yellow flowers on short pedicels. The fruit is a dry schizocarp from 4-10 millimetres long. Since the seed in the fruit is attached to the pericarp, the whole fruit is often mistakenly called "seed".



Fennel is widely cultivated, both in its native range and elsewhere for its edible, strongly flavoured leaves and fruits. It's aniseed or liquorice flavour comes anethole an aromatic compound also found in anise and star anise, and its taste and aroma are similar to theirs, although not as strong.

### **Nutrition**

A raw fennel bulb (235 g) consists of 212g of water, 2.91g of protein, 0.47g of fat and 17.2g of carbohydrate (including 7.28g of dietary fibre and 9.24g of sugars), providing a total 72.8 calories of energy.

It also provides calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, sodium and traces of zinc, copper, and selenium, vitamin Bs, C and K.

Dried fennel fruits are typically used as a spice and normally eaten only in minute quantities. They are a rich source of protein, dietary fibre, B vitamins, calcium, iron, magnesium and manganese.

### **Uses**

Both the bulbs, seeds and leaves are used in cooking. Bulb is a crisp vegetable that can be sautéed, stewed, braised, grilled or eaten raw. Leaves used for garnishes, salads, sauces. Both the inflated leaf bases and the tender young shoots can be eaten like celery.

Research indicates it can be a helpful remedy for Colicky infants, breast feeding, respiratory system (gargling an infusion of fennel seed oil can loosen mucus in lungs and relieve coughs and sore throats), reduce menstrual cramps, benefit heart health and may have cancer-fighting properties. It may also suppress appetite yet current study results are conflicting.

### **Chocolate Chip & Fennel Seed Cookies Recipe.**

2 1/2 cups of all purpose flour.

1 1/2 teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 Tablespoon fennel seeds, lightly toasted in a dry skillet for 1 minute and then finely ground.

3/4 cup of pure cane sugar

3/4 cup brown sugar

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

1 tsp vanilla extract

2 eggs at room temperature

1-2 Tablespoon milk at room temperature.

1 cup dark chocolate chips (reserve a few to place on top of each cookie before baking.)

#### *Preparation.*

Preheat the oven 180. Line 2 baking sheets with baking paper and set aside.

In a large bowl stir together the flour, salt, baking soda and fennel seeds. In a separate bowl combine the sugars, oil and vanilla. Beat in the eggs, one at a time. Gradually stir in the flour mixture and beat until well combined. Add 1 Tbsp of milk to make the dough a little more workable and add more if necessary. Fold in chocolate chips.

Drop cookies into 2 Tbsp balls on baking sheet, top with reserved chocolate chips. Bake for 9 - 12 minutes. Place on wire rack to cool and enjoy.

Reference: *Wikipedia*



**Member Profile:** Maggie Elford

I was born in South Canterbury Margaret McKenzie, where I lived on a farm along with my parents and two sisters and brother until I went off to Christchurch to train as a teacher. There I made four very lasting friendships. In 2015 we all met on Naxos, Greece (where one of the group still lives) and had a wonderful time of catching up and reminiscing. I have taught in Inglewood, Lower Hutt, Pleasant Point, Westport and in 1978 I came to Invercargill for a couple of years!!!



I became involved with lots of groups and in particular the Invercargill Operatic Society as it was in those days. Once I had my family, (Jessica now in the UK and Doug who is closer in Christchurch) life became even busier and here I am in 2021 still with strong connections to Invercargill. Nearly ten years ago Stephen and I decided to leave home, in our motor home and to travel around for a year. The year came and went, and we haven't returned permanently. We have spent time on the road, overseas, TeAnau and Clyde. We have now been settled in Clyde for the last three years and I am particularly enjoying it as I can grow and care for a more permanent garden. Last year we had a very productive veg garden and the fruit trees were very prolific.



We finally have grandchildren (after a very long wait!) - three granddaughters, Alexandra aged three and lives in the UK, Tui aged two years and Awhina aged 9 months and lives much closer to us in Christchurch and Leo aged 4 months and lives in Auckland. Plenty to keep us busy.

I have always had a strong desire to grow my own food and to be as self sufficient in as many aspects of my life as I can. So that includes sewing, gardening and all aspects of food preparation. I have done several courses and workshops over the years, that include bread making, cheese making, organic gardening, cooking and sewing classes. I have been involved with the Southland Community Nursery in Otatara as a voluntary for many years and this has included presenting foraging workshops. Currently I am enrolled in the HFNZ's Herb Certificate course which involves completing 12 modules on a variety of topics.



I joined the Southland Herb Society when I gave up full time teaching back in 2006. My first year involved the preparation of a festival the following year, and it had the rainbow theme. I was in the Green group with Nelda and Amanda and Kevin and it was our brief to display the growing aspect of herbs. It was such a great way to forge and form firm friendships. It wasn't long before I managed to be coerced onto the committee. Initially I had a turn at being secretary but my main contribution since 2009 has been the newsletter editor. (Avis did do a few years in between so it hasn't been continuous service). I continue and try to make as many meetings as I can throughout the year as I find the meetings informative and the group very friendly. I have recently become involved with the HFNZ at the executive level. I volunteered to be the coordinator of their Herb Certificate course. It, of course, has been a bit more involved than I initially thought but still interesting!!!!

# Message Board



## Progressive Christmas dinner and garden tour

Thursday 25 November 5pm start



5pm to begin at Julie Cook's: 11 Ruru Avenue Otatara. You can go out Stead Street and along Dunn's Road past the school and golf course gate. (Return will have to be via Bay Road as Stead Street is only one way for the next six months due to flood protection work)  
6.15pm leave for Jill Howden's: 203 Chesney Street Invercargill  
8.15pm leave for Judith Stewart's: 68 Melbourne Street Invercargill

### *What to bring*

Your food for dinner	Glass	Cutlery
Plates for main and dessert	Cup for tea/ coffee	
A \$5 present to swap preferably something you have made, a plant or ?		

Remember you bring either (depending on your group in the programme)

Nibbles: **Jan/ Feb**

Main: **April, May, June** Veg, fish or salad dish and the committee have organised a ham

Dessert: **October, November**

New people can bring a dessert

**Herb of the Night:** Frankincense



### Next Committee Meeting

2 December 2021  
148 Elles Road  
RSVP to Julianne asp

### *\$35 single or \$50 family*

Payment by direct banking  
03 1746 0002322 00  
Please include your name as the reference.  
(Cheques no longer accepted by the bank)  
or with cash to Gillian Knarston

### *Herb Embroidery Group*

Wednesday 1 December

**Hostess:** Christine Whitaker's  
182 Ritchie St  
10.30 am onwards

Bring food for a shared lunch  
**Theme for gift to exchange is :**  
*Make it, Bake it  
or Grow it*

Contact Christine for further  
details phone 03 2174563



*The Southland Herb Society accepts no liability for any ill effects resulting in the use of information printed in this newsletter. Every effort has been made to ensure that all details are accurate. If in doubt consult a qualified herbal practitioner. Opinions and views expressed in any article are not necessarily those of the editor or the committee.*

### Jeanie's crackers

½ cup each of sesame seeds, linseeds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds and rolled oats  
1 ¾ cups flour- you can use gluten free. I did.

1 tsp salt,  
1 tsp baking powder  
Mix dry ingredients

Add 1 cup water and ⅓ cup oil.

Let stand 15 minutes.

Roll out thinly between 2 sheets of baking paper.

Add a sprinkle of salt.

Indent into squares on top of baking paper then remove top sheet before putting in oven.

Bake 180°C for 10 minutes, turn to down to 160°C for another 15-20 minutes until brown on top.

### Handy garden hint

A way to test your seeds is by putting them in water. The viable ones sink to the bottom. If they float they are no good. Quick and easy and works for the author of this hint. *(Author unknown)*



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