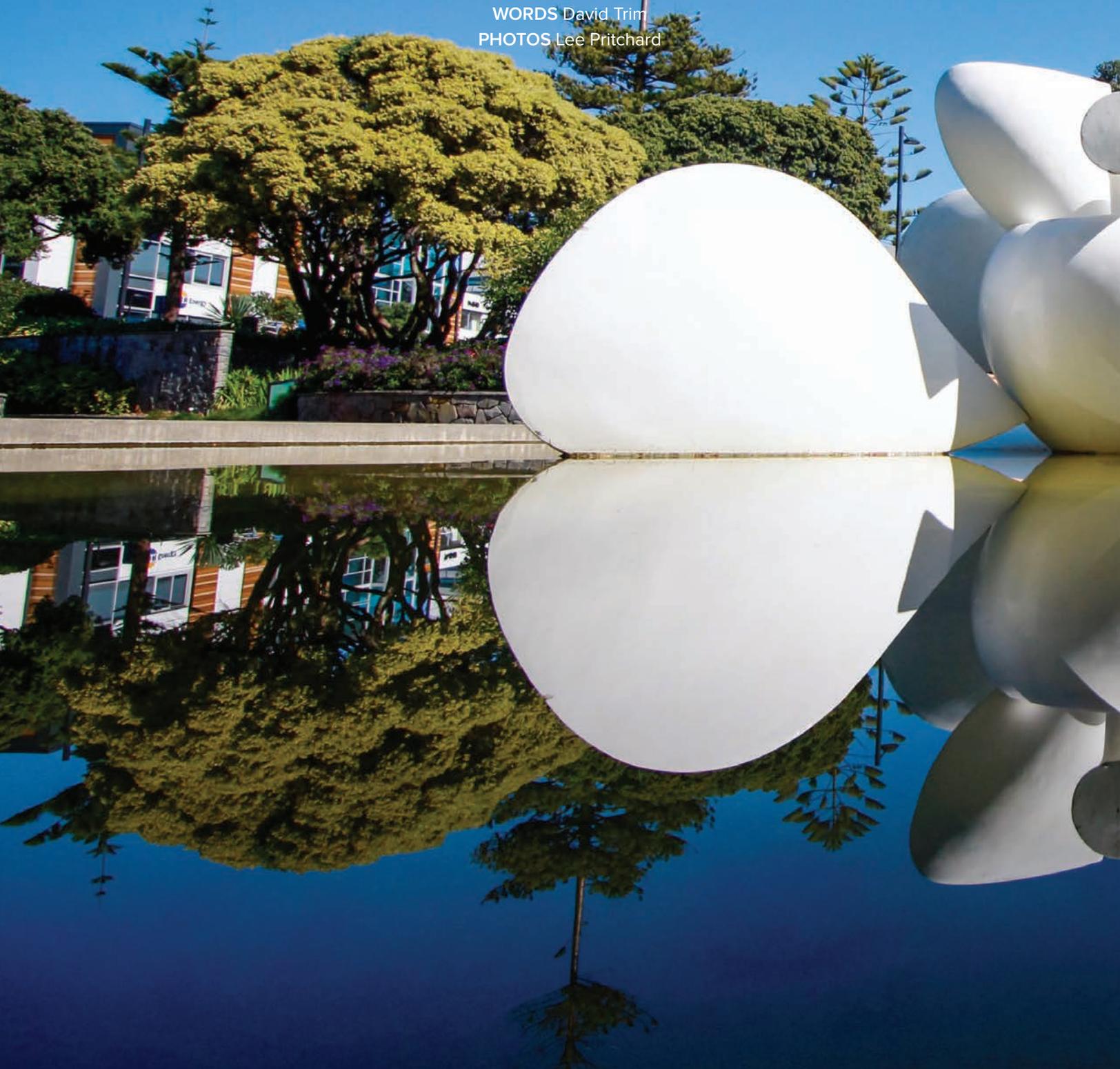


Colour Boost

Napier City Gardens

Over the next four editions we will feature the gardens that are designed, planted and maintained by our councils. We begin with a look at Napier City Council's gardens.

WORDS David Trim
PHOTOS Lee Pritchard



People often say there is nothing exciting about a garden after summer annuals start to fade, but if planned well, an all-season garden can provide exuberant colour all year round. An April afternoon spent wandering through Napier's gardens reveals not only vibrant colours but also the artworks carefully crafted for our pleasure.

The Sunken Gardens are a delight for many reasons. Themes from South African landscape to dry rivers and showcasing centre-stage displays are all tied together with flowing water and curved walkways. The biomorphic sculpture was created by a Cantabrian from Christchurch's Ilam School of Fine Arts. The sculpture appears to float like a giant water lily. People have varying opinions of what



The Sunken Gardens, Napier

it represents, from a sitting duck to a tea-party cup and saucer. The joy of this abstract sculpture is that from different angles and under different lighting every perspective is open to individual interpretation.

The water wheel turns with a constant rhythmic momentum. Rich in history, it was first used in 1911 to run a cream separator and butter churn, then shearing, sawmilling and electricity generation. From its original home in Te Rehunga, Dannevirke, it was relocated to Napier in 1967.

Napier City Council has fourteen full-time horticultural team members who work from six different city depots.

Each team stays focused on their location so they get to know their gardens well. They also have hands-on involvement in the design, including colour and planting. This can lead to robust discussions as ideas are formed and colour matches debated. While the flower beds are being planted, plans are also being decided upon for the next garden design, which is up to six months away.

Themes are discussed and determined by the team also. As an example, for the last Rugby World Cup, the flag colours of the international teams that played in Hawke's Bay were used in the centre stage gardens on Marine Parade.

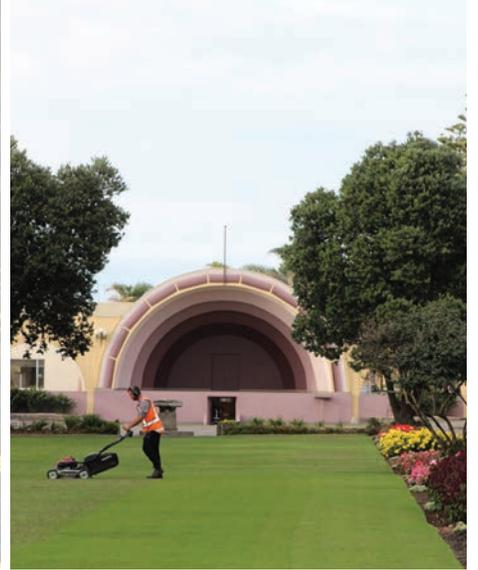
Some are more formal, like the Marine Parade Gardens where designs are traditional, while the Centennial Gardens allow more freedom. The Kennedy Park Rose Garden on Storkey Street contains 5000 different cultivars. If that doesn't test your senses, wander through the sensory garden to experience the textures and smells created by the roses.

The council's horticultural team produces over 160,000 annuals and perennials each year.

All are grown in their own nursery, mostly from seed gathered by the team from council gardens. Napier is one of only a few councils left that run their own nursery, producing 90% of their plants, including annuals, perennials shrubs and natives.



FROM TOP: The water wheel in the Sunken Gardens; the Marine Parade Gardens being tended to by a council worker; the Sunken Gardens





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Kennedy Park Rose Garden; the Botanical Gardens; the Station Street roundabout planted with marigolds



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Shelley Exeter is the team leader for the public gardens and nursery. Shelley says her favourite garden spot is the top of the Botanical Gardens. “This is a place of serenity for me. I love the feel of the surroundings there and the intrigue of being at the beginning of so many paths that lead through the garden.”

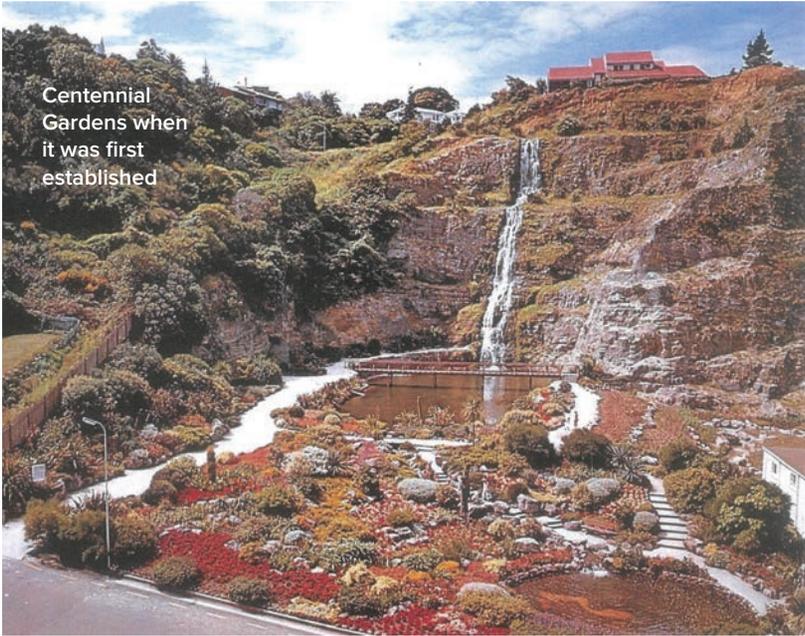
The Botanical Gardens were designed by the famous botanist and printer William Colenso, who died in 1899. Colenso was present for the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi and dabbled in politics. He is now at rest in the old cemetery at the top of the garden. What a great concept to design such a masterpiece garden and have it as your final resting place.

Clive Square gardens are a more formal and symmetrical design, with long skinny palms rising above the neighbouring buildings, giving it a Californian feel. There are five different species of palms in the square, all planted just after the 1931 earthquake.

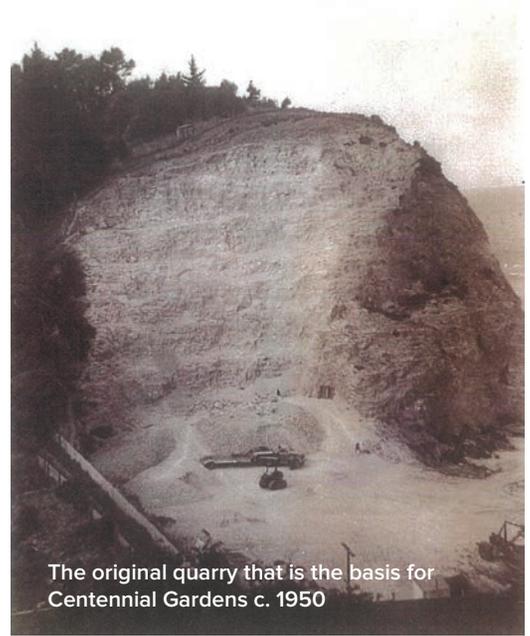
Centre stage is the large Edwardian lily pond, which has fascinated children since it was built in 1904. Once, a rotunda stage was prominent in the square and would have been well used, with weekend brass bands and other entertainment. Today the only regular sounds generated from the square come from the musical bells and the hustle and bustle of the farmers’ market on Saturday mornings.

The gardens on
Bluff Hill Lookout





Centennial Gardens when it was first established



The original quarry that is the basis for Centennial Gardens c. 1950



Centennial Gardens sits snugged into the rock face on the eastern side of Napier Hill. The garden was built after the area quarrying work ceased. Inmates from Napier Prison broke rocks here in true old-fashioned prisoner work style. After the quarry ceased, the prisoners worked to form the gardens.

Napier City boasts beautiful gardens thanks to the passion and colourful designing of the council's horticultural team. Be sure to take time to smell the roses, admire the creativity and tip your hat in appreciation when you walk past these unsung heroes, whilst they tend their gardens.



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